

Rucking into New Territory: A Case-Study on the Experiences of Pioneer Female Club
Rugby Players in Ontario

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Abstract

The gender hierarchy found within sport has been reinforced through the use of traditional interpretations of masculinity, making sport a well-suited arena to examine gender inequity in its many forms. My thesis explores the challenges experienced by female pioneer rugby players in Ontario and their participation in a traditionally masculine sport. In order to explore the experiences of the female pioneer club players in Ontario, I conducted interviews with eight women and did multiple forms of content analyses. The analyses allowed me to describe the type of support the participants had and the barriers these female players encountered relative to their male counterparts of the era. My findings indicated that gender inequity, in both blatant and habit based manifestations, was at the forefront of the challenges endured by the pioneer players. Further research should investigate women's involvement with the political and policy development aspects of the sport of rugby.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Rugby has been an integral part of my life since I was a child. I can still remember watching rugby on television, going to watch my father coach a girls' high school rugby team, and my father teaching me how to throw a rugby ball at a tree to practice accuracy. The love I have for rugby first developed from the affection and devotion that my father has for the sport. My father has been involved in the rugby community for many years and is a pioneer in the sport himself as he started the first girls' high school team in Ontario. It is through my father's involvement in rugby that I too decided to participate in the sport. Once I reached high school I began to play rugby and I have not stopped since. I joined the same rugby club that my father belongs to and began playing on their junior girls' team during my first year of high school. At the age of 18, I began playing on the women's club team. I have now been playing rugby for over 12 years. Over the span of my rugby career, I have had the privilege of playing high school, club and university rugby.

With my father's encouragement and my love for the game, I took the opportunity to become involved in rugby in more than just a player capacity. I have coached high school girls' rugby and refereed high school and club rugby. I have also sat on my club's executive committee and now work in the rugby field. All of these opportunities have allowed me to develop different insights into the game. Although I have been involved in rugby for many years and would like to think I am well informed about the sport itself, I was unfamiliar with how women's teams in North America developed and the experiences of the first sanctioned female rugby players.

Being a female rugby player and knowing the struggles I faced playing a sport that is considered masculine, I began to wonder what struggles the pioneer female rugby players had to endure. Women's rugby teams began to develop in North America during the 1970s and 1980s (Chandler & Nauright, 1999; Carle & Nauright, 1999). Although the women's game has been in existence for thirty to forty years, there are barriers I continue to encounter as a female who is playing what is noted as an aggressive, contact sport. My own struggles led me to question what the first female rugby players' challenges were and how much they differed from my own. I became intrigued to learn what these pioneer players had to go through to get a rugby team for women started – what were their experiences trying to play this sport that I have come to love?

Background

A sport can be labeled as feminine or masculine depending on the characteristics the sport promotes (Hall, 2008; Lenskyj, 2003; Daniels, 2009). The labeling of a sport as feminine or masculine is based on the sport embodying hegemonic notions of masculinity or emphasized femininity¹. A sport is considered feminine if it portrays characteristics of grace and elegance; whereas a sport viewed as masculine would depict characteristics such as strength and aggression (Hall, 2008; Lenskyj, 2003). Individuals who play a sport that does not coincide with dominant views of their gender are said to play a sport that is not gender appropriate. Participation in a sport that is not considered gender appropriate often leads to the individual being ridiculed and judged by others (Griffin, 1998; Lenskyj, 2003; Hall, 2002; Daniels, 2009). The sexuality and gender of the person playing a non-

¹ I have used the term emphasized femininity as opposed to hegemonic femininity throughout my thesis. I explain in the Literature Review the reasoning behind why I chose to use the term emphasized femininity.

gender appropriate sport is often questioned (Lorber & Moore, 2007; Hargreaves, 1993; Daniels, 2009).

When rugby was developed in the late 1800s, it was identified as a means for boys and men to learn how to be masculine in the public and private schools of the British Empire (Carle & Nauright, 1999) and this theme translates into women's roles within the sport. As rugby is considered to be a stereotypically masculine sport, some women playing the game have been labeled as sexual deviants (Cahn, 1994). This labeling of female athletes as sexual deviants has occurred from a fear that the females playing a masculine sport would learn characteristics associated with masculinity making them more like men (Cahn, 1994). This fear regarding the sexuality of female athletes has compelled some women to confront stigmas associated with playing a masculine sport.

Rugby is now growing in popularity for women. When the women I interviewed started playing rugby at the club level in Ontario between the late 1970s to early 1990s, there were few other women's teams, if any, in existence in the province. As of the 2015 season, there were a total of 2 948 registered women in Ontario who participated in some capacity in rugby (Rugby Ontario, 2016). Of those 2 948 females registered in Ontario, there was a total of 2 677 who registered as players. More specifically, 469 females registered as Minor players, 1 271 females registered as Junior players and 937 females registered as Senior players (Rugby Ontario, 2016). Minor rugby consists of players between the ages of 5 and 12 years old, while those eligible to play at the Junior level must be between the ages of 13 and 18 years old. Players who are 18 years and older can register as Senior players (Rugby Ontario, 2016). When the women I interviewed began playing club rugby, there were only Senior women's teams being developed. Now at the

club level, rugby has grown to include Minor and Junior rugby in addition to Senior rugby.

Some research has been done with respect to the responses of female athletes to stigmas regarding their sexuality when participating in a masculine sport. Female athletes have responded to stigmas associated with their sexuality by confronting the stigma or using apologist behaviours (Ezzell, 2009; Gill, 2007; Krane, 2001; Hardy, 2015).

However, I have not found research regarding rugby players who are women and may have had to respond to stigmas due to their participation during the formative years of women's rugby. I am interested in exploring the experiences of pioneer women's rugby players in Ontario to learn what struggles they encountered while participating in a masculine sport for the first time at their respective clubs.

Purpose

The purpose of this case study is to explore the experiences of the inaugural female club rugby players in Ontario. Using a radical feminist lens, I explore what these pioneer female rugby players faced through their participation in what is considered to be a masculine sport. Through this research, I hoped to discover why these women wanted to play rugby and their experiences playing rugby during the formative years of their women's rugby teams at their respective clubs in Ontario. I was eager to explore barriers these pioneer players faced in relation to both gender inequity and their sexual identity through their engagement in rugby. Finally, I was able to learn of the support systems these female pioneer players had in regard to their participation in a masculine sport.

Research Questions

- 1) Why did the pioneer female rugby players in this study decide to play a sport that contradicts emphasized femininity and was previously only played by men?
- 2) What type of support did pioneer female club rugby players in Ontario have from their family, friends and club members?
- 3) What barriers and obstacles did these pioneer female rugby players face through their participation in a 'masculine' sport?
- 4) What were the experiences of the women who participated during the formative years of women's club rugby teams in Ontario?

Importance of Study

The development of men's rugby is well known and documented; however, the same cannot be said for the development of women's rugby. While reviewing the literature, it became evident that there was a lack of information regarding the experience of women who played during the formative years of women's rugby in North America. The information that was found in the literature with respect to women's experiences of rugby was not distinct to pioneer female rugby players.

I believe it is important to explore the experiences of the pioneer women's club rugby players in Ontario to learn and understand how their experiences and involvement in rugby impacted women's sport. Women's participation in sport was not always accepted or considered appropriate; therefore, it is important to explore how the pioneer female club rugby players in Ontario were able to overcome barriers to be able to play. The pioneer female club rugby players were able to develop teams that would give future generations of girls and women a greater opportunity to play rugby, thus creating a need

to explore their experiences. I hope that an exploration into the barriers and struggles of the pioneer female rugby players would lead to a better understanding of cultural influences such as gender inequity and gender norms that have affected the participation of girls and women in sport. It is important to understand how gender norms impact sport as the ridicule and stigma regarding the gender and sexuality of individuals playing a non-gender appropriate sport may lessen by understanding the influences culture has on sport.

Introduction to Chapters

My thesis contains chapters focusing on a review of the literature, research design, data analysis and, conclusion, discussion and future directions. The literature review examines gender and sexuality issues in sport and focuses on the impact that gender ideology has on women's participation in rugby. Following the review of literature is a chapter regarding research design. The chapter on research design focuses on case study methodology and methods that I used to conduct my research, which includes sampling, data collection, and data analysis. In the fourth chapter I present a discussion of the findings and how they pertain to my research questions. The final chapter of my thesis will consist of conclusions regarding the findings of my research and a discussion of their relationship to the literature. The fifth chapter will also include future directions that can be taken with respect to the research and findings I obtained from my study.

Terminology

Provided below is terminology used throughout my thesis. The explanation of these terms can be referenced for clarification regarding their use throughout my thesis.

Gender inequity: disparities and discrimination, in both obvious displays and micro aggressions, based in gender. An example of a micro aggression, based in gender, that perpetuates gender inequity is the rugby culture of drinking and singing. Specifically, the lyrics in rugby songs are often derogatory, degrading and demeaning toward women and therefore this act, or micro aggression, propagates gender inequity.

Sexual identity: disparities and discrimination based in identifying as lesbian.

Old boys: This term can be used to describe alumni from certain public and private schools, universities, or clubs in countries such as England, Australia, Scotland, Wales, etc. and in this context, can be viewed as prestigious. These alumni were taught masculine characteristics through their participation in rugby from the 1800s onward (Dunning and Sheard, 2005) and is as much a reference to class as to gender. When the term ‘old boys’ is used in my thesis, it will not be referring to these alumni in a prestigious manner. When the women interviewed referred to ‘old boys’, they were using the term to describe older men who often came from the aforementioned countries and reallocated to Canada. These men were raised on the rugby traditions they learned playing in their countries of origins from the schools they attended or clubs they were part of. Their mindset towards who should be playing rugby was based on the masculine traditions of the game. To the women interviewed, older men from countries where rugby was considered to be a masculine sport with longstanding traditions and who were

opposed to women playing rugby are referred to as 'old boys' and used in a more negative context.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter is an exploration into the literature on gender and sexuality issues in sport. This review begins with a discussion on feminist theories, with a focus on radical feminism and the impact feminist theories have on sport. The review continues by discussing the social construction of gender including the impact of gender hierarchies and the ways in which gender constructs impact sport, women, and sexuality. In particular, this review examines the ways in which sports are based on a two-category classification system that celebrates dominant forms of masculinity and often socially marginalizes girls and women (Coakley, 2004). Furthermore, this review examines how gender ideology impacts women's participation in rugby, a game traditionally played by men and coded as masculine.

Gender and the Body

Gender differences associated with the body are often viewed as natural, universal, transhistorical, and enduring facts (Bordo, 1993; Fausto-Sterling, 2003; Lorber & Moore, 2007). However, the performance of masculinity in sport creates the illusion that masculinity is natural and universal (Davison & Frank, 2007). Feminist scholars have challenged the understanding that gender and sexuality are natural and enduring facts, arguing that they are complex social constructions (Butler, 1990, as cited in Schippers, 2007; Davison & Frank, 2007). Anne Fausto-Sterling (2000) argues that social beliefs have affected the scientific knowledge that has been produced. In other words, although male and female bodies are different, the meanings ascribed to these differences are socially constructed. Furthermore, the social construction of gender is established by its

changes over time and place (Daniels, 2009). Gender socialization “refers to the incorporation of sexed ways of behaving and thinking, which leads to the fact that someone thinks and feels like he or she is endowed with one given gender identity” (Joncheray, Level & Richard, 2016, p. 164).

Gender is defined as the:

Legal status as a woman or man, usually based on sex assigned at birth, but may be legally changed. Gender status produces patterns of social expectations for bodies, behavior, emotions, family and work roles. Gendered expectations can change over time both on individual and social levels (Lorber & Moore, 2007, p. 5).

Normative western understandings of gender equate men and boys with masculinity and women and girls with femininity creating the dualism between masculinity and femininity. Masculinity is privileged, through the presumed superiority of masculinity, over femininity and in order for male bodies and behaviour to be considered masculine they must clearly be read as different, or opposite, of what it is traditionally considered feminine (Lorber & Moore, 2007; Daniels, 2009; Schippers, 2007; Krane, 2001). Chase (2006) examines how the “size of the female sporting body often contradicts dominant ideas of the feminine body” (p. 229), specifically through the sport of rugby. Chase (2006) further explains how the “discourses that shape who counts as a rugby player have perpetuated the notion that rugby is male terrain and a rugby body is a male body” (p. 229). The constructed normative feminine body is in opposition with a sport that requires women to tackle other women, get hit, bruised, battered and bloody (Chase, 2006; Hardy, 2015).

Feminist Theories and Sport

Feminist theories in relation to sport are not just the study of gender and sport, but the interpretation of sport as a gendered activity through the use of a theoretical approach (Birrell, 2000). Birrell (2000) maintains:

The connection of feminist theories to sporting practice can best be characterized as providing the theoretical underpinnings for the arguments made by advocacy groups as they work to redress the inequalities and increase the opportunities for girls and women in sport (p. 70).

Sport serves as a site for celebrating skills, values and characteristics associated with masculinity, making sport a logical site for analysis of gender relationships (Birrell, 2000). The use of feminist theory for my research is justified as my research focuses on inequities in sport for women who play a ‘masculine’ sport.

The basis of feminism may be understood in all its approaches as the belief that women have suffered injustices because of their sex. Feminism is not only a sexual-based theory, but a political, economic, social and race-based theory as well. Furthermore, feminism explains the situations and experiences of women and how to improve them (Humm, 1995; Frye, 2000). Rather than solely focusing on the suffering and injustices of women, feminist theories focus on gender and the way in which it affects societal norms and beliefs (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005). Gender relations and the privileging of gender as a central category are imperative features of feminist theories “because they are founded on the belief that human experiences are gendered” (Birrell, 2000, p. 62). There are differing feminist theories under the umbrella of feminist theory. I will focus on radical feminism as a lens for my research. Radical feminism is being used as a result of the female pioneer rugby players I interviewed who stated that gender inequity was the main obstacle they encountered. Radical feminism offers the strengths of its early (albeit essentialist)

unapologetic commitment to solidarity and sisterhood and its more contemporary embrace of socially constructed differences between and among women and between women and men. As bell hooks (1984) insists: “women do not need to eradicate difference to feel solidarity. We do not need to share common oppression to fight equally to end oppression” (p 65). Gayatri Spivak (1987) has also argued that feminist politics can be rooted in a ‘strategic essentialism’. This is to underscore that using a radical feminist lens to guide the analysis of this study allows the researcher to take the best elements of this approach and apply them in the service of the stories and experiences of the pioneering rugby women. Strategic essentialism was utilized by pioneer female club rugby players in Ontario in a positive manner. Through the ‘sisterhood’ amongst the women and their commonality in gender, the pioneer women were able to achieve their common goal of participation in rugby in a player capacity.

Radical feminism is premised on the assertion that sex oppression is the fundamental oppression—that is, that women’s oppression is based on the relations of domination and subordination among the sexes, where women are seen as a sex class and other areas of everyday domination and subordination (i.e., repression) spring from this and are shaped by it (Crow, 2000; Thompson, 2001). Regarding radical feminists, Putnam Tong (1998) states: “None of these feminists wanted to preserve the status quo, especially the sex/gender system that they identified as the primary cause of women’s oppression.” (p.45-46). Furthermore, Putnam Tong suggests: “In order to qualify as a radical feminist, a feminist must insist the sex/gender system is the fundamental cause of women’s oppression (p.46). Although a limitation of radical feminism is that it is essentialist as it does not examine race and class, the women interviewed were united in

their solidarity through their gender, as women, first and foremost. Radical feminists theorize from everyday life and oppose patriarchy, a sexual, cultural and social system of power rooted heavily in heterosexuality in which men possess superior power and economic privilege. This system is reproduced and activated in everyday relations (O'Reilly, 2000). Radical feminists believe that for women to expunge gender oppression, male control must be eliminated. For this to occur, men and women would have to eliminate gender as it has been constructed under patriarchy (Putnam Tong, 1998).

*Dueling Dualisms*²

Dualisms consist of “pairs of opposing concepts, objects, or belief systems”, where one term is often privileged or valued over the other (Fausto-Sterling, 2000, p. 21). There are numerous dualisms³, such as nature/culture, mind/body, civilized/primitive, white/black, male/female, masculine/feminine, heterosexual/homosexual, sex/gender (Fausto-Sterling, 2000; Fausto-Sterling, 2003; Grosz 1994). The terms of a dualism are oppositional so one term becomes privileged and the other becomes subordinate (Grosz, 1994; Fausto-Sterling, 2000; Schippers, 2007). The privileged term can be said to be what the subordinate term is not (Davison & Frank, 2007); what is considered masculine is not feminine (Schacht, 1996; Schippers, 2007).

Gender and sexuality are two social categories that are based on a dichotomous relationship in which one term is privileged, legitimized, and valued over the other. In

² The term ‘dueling dualisms’ is borrowed from Fausto-Sterling, A. (2000). *Sexing the body: Gender politics and the construction of sexuality*. New York, NY: Basic Books.

³ Dualisms, dichotomies and binaries are all terms that are used in the literature that have a similar definition.

regard to gender, masculinity is privileged over femininity and heterosexuality over homosexuality in relation to sexuality (Davison & Frank, 2007). The dualistic term masculinity/femininity reveals a gender hierarchy that operates within sport, impacting participants, particularly those in sports that are not considered gender appropriate.

Gender Hierarchy

Gender hierarchies rely on the maintenance of gender conformity such that an individual's appearance and actions must remain clearly distinguishable as female and male based on normative cultural ideals of femininity and masculinity (Lorber & Moore, 2007; Bordo, 1993). A gender hierarchy has development based on an understanding that there is a physical difference between men and women, which favours men's physical capabilities over women's (Lorber & Moore, 2007; Schippers, 2007; Krane, 2001; Markula & Pringle, 2006). There has been opposition to gender equality in sport through the continuation of marginalizing women in order to maintain the gender hierarchy that privileges men (Griffin, 1998; Schippers, 2007; Krane, 2001; Messner, 2002).

To ensure that this gender hierarchy remains intact, sport has continued to be defined and reinforced using traditional conceptions of masculinity (Griffin, 1998). By reinforcing an environment that is suitable and acceptable for "male bonding and intimacy, reinforcing male privilege and female subordination, establishing status among other males, and reinforcing heterosexuality" (Griffin, 1998, p. 20), it perpetuates the gender hierarchy that places masculinity as the privileged gender and femininity as the subordinate gender. In order to keep this gender hierarchy intact, there must be maintenance of hegemonic masculinity and emphasized femininity (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005).

Gender Hegemony

Orlowski (2011) defines hegemony as “the ideal representation of the interest of the privileged groups as universal interests, which are then accepted by the masses as the natural political and social order” (p. 2). In regard to gender, Daniels states:

The construction of gender and an increasingly strong common-sense belief in its naturalness is one site of conflict within a culture. It has become a defining and restrictive factor in the lives of many people. Inflexible interpretations of what women and men are and can be has contributed to a power imbalance among individuals and groups.” (2009, p. 70).

The interest of the privileged group or the dominant set of beliefs is mutually agreed upon, but can be contested. However, the dominant set of beliefs is usually connected to ‘common-sense’ understanding, which makes them difficult to challenge (Davison & Frank, 2007). Hegemony is achieved through culture, institutions, and persuasion (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005).

There is not only one form of masculinity and femininity that exist within a culture, but multiples forms. Gender hegemony is produced through hegemonic masculinity and emphasized femininity and the legitimizing of men’s dominance over women (Schippers, 2007). The literature review will focus on hegemonic masculinity and emphasized femininity because although they need not be the most practiced they are the most valued forms of gender (Connell, 1998).

Characteristics of Emphasized Femininity

Knowing what it means to be considered feminine is crucial to the understanding of the subordination of women in sport. There are many characteristics associated with femininity. To be considered feminine, one is thought to be frail, imperfect, weak, vulnerable, unruly, unreliable, unpredictable, graceful, kind, kept, passive, and

disembodied (Grosz, 1994; Hall, 2008; Gill, 2007; Krane, 2001; Schacht, 1996; Daniels, 2009). The female body is often thought of as being incapable of achieving what the male body is able to accomplish (Grosz, 1994). Although the female body is considered to be weak, processes of gendering the body must be taken into consideration when addressing the physical capabilities of the female body (Howson, 2005; Fausto-Sterling, 2000).

Although some scholars, such as Connell (1987) believe that there cannot be hegemonic femininity, others disagree (Schippers, 2007; Krane, 2001). Connell (1987) states that there cannot be any form of femininity that is hegemonic because: “All forms of femininity in this society are constructed in the context of the overall subordination of women to men. For this reason, there is no femininity that holds among women the position held by hegemonic masculinity among men” (p. 187). Connell instead uses the term *emphasized femininity*, a form of femininity in which women position themselves in relation to the interests of the men.

The term hegemonic femininity is also used in the literature. Schippers (2007) defines hegemonic femininity as: “characteristics defined as womanly that establish and legitimate a hierarchical and complementary relationship to hegemonic masculinity and that, by doing so, guarantee the dominant position of men and the subordination of women” (p. 94). Characteristics that are considered to promote hegemonic femininity are: “being emotional, passive, dependent, maternal, compassionate, and gentle” (Krane, 2001, p. 117). Women who do not comply with hegemonic femininity are marginalized (Krane, 2001). Although hegemonic femininity is used in the literature, I will be using the term *emphasized femininity* throughout my thesis, as I align with Connell (1987) and his justification that all forms of femininity are in subordination to masculinity and therefore

cannot be labelled as hegemonic. Female athletes are marginalized when they do not participate in sports that promote emphasized femininity, and engage in physically rough sports (Hall, 2002, 2008).

Characteristics of Hegemonic Masculinity

It has been previously stated that gender is learned and adopted rather than natural. Sport encourages boys and men to learn and adopt masculine characteristic and teaches 'manhood'. It also emphasizes the development of a masculine identity which aids in acceptance from their peers (Griffin, 1998). Boys are often directed into sport from a young age because it is thought they can learn masculine characteristics through participation in sport. Male bodies are often labeled as strong, muscular and active because it has been culturally accepted for males to play and participate in sport and physical activity from a young age (Grosz, 1994).

Although there are many forms of masculinity, I will be focusing on hegemonic masculinity and how this form of masculinity relates to sport. Connell & Messerschmidt (2005) define hegemonic masculinity as: "the pattern of practice (i.e., things done, not just a set of role expectations or an identity) that allowed men's dominance over women to continue" (p. 832). Although a minority of men may enact hegemonic masculinity, it is considered normative because it is the most honoured way of being a man, which emphasizes the dominance of men over women (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005; Connell, 2005; Schippers, 2007). Characteristics and attributes of hegemonic masculinity include: physical strength, competitiveness, endurance, speed, coordination, assertiveness, aggressiveness, confidence, and independence (Krane, 2001; Schippers, 2007; Davison & Frank, 2007; Schacht, 1996). The institution of sport promotes the

achievement of hegemonic masculinity for males in sports such as boxing, football and rugby (Hardy, 2015).

Sport not only subordinates girls and women, but boys and men who do not conform to the characteristics that convey hegemonic masculinity (Davison, 1996, 2000a, as cited in Davison & Frank, 2007). Boys and men who do not meet the standards of hegemonic masculinity are often stigmatized and ridiculed and said to belong to subordinate masculinities (Connell, 1995, as cited in Schippers, 2007).

Gender Order in Sport

When organized sport developed in Canada in the early nineteenth century, upper- and middle class men participated in sport more freely and with far less criticism than females (Kidd, 1996). During Victorian times it was considered normal for middle-class women and girls to live their lives predominantly within private spaces, such as the home. There was a belief that all of the energy that a female had should be focused on childbearing and childrearing capacities. Furthermore, any use of energy outside of a childbearing and childrearing capacity was thought to potentially harm female bodies (Davison & Frank, 2007). The feminine body was thought to be too weak, fragile and delicate to partake in demanding physical activity, therefore restricting female participation (Kidd, 1996; Dowling, 2001, as cited in Davison & Frank, 2007). As a result, their access to the public spaces such as the workplace or sporting clubs was restricted. Gender roles were reinforced by the constraint of women in sport and women were directed to a domestic role instead (Morrow & Wamsley, 2010). Women who did participate in sport challenged traditional social values, particularly if these women did not seek to fulfill feminine qualities (Morrow & Wamsley, 2010; Lenskyj, 2003; Hall,

2002, 2008). Lenskyj (2003) maintains gender does not only impact individuals, but social practices and social spheres as well, including the institution of sport. The institution of sport, while being considered masculine and a means to promote masculine characteristics, does include sports that are considered to be feminine.

The history of women's sports has been composed of "rejections, struggles, prejudice and then slow recognition." (Joncheray & Tlili, 2013, p. 773). The participation of women in competitive sport was uncommon and unusual to most individuals in Canada until the last decade of the nineteenth century (Morrow & Wamsley, 2010; Young & White, 2007). The development and acceptance of women's sports can be compared to the evolution of women's status in society (Joncheray & Tlili, 2013). Upper- and middle-class Canadian women began to develop their own sporting events and clubs during the last decade of the nineteenth century as they were rejected entry to upper- and middle-class men's sporting clubs (Hall, 2002; Young & White, 2007; Morrow & Wamsley, 2010). The development of women's sporting events and clubs can be identified through the formation of 'ladies' clubs for tennis, golf and curling in the late 1800s and the first women's tennis tournament held in Montreal in 1881 (Hall, 2002). Gender segregation became embedded in the development of organized sport as women's participation grew at the turn of the century in Canada. Moreover, clear gender divisions were established, further entrenching a gender hierarchy (Messner, 2002).

Feminist sport scholars argue that when sporting women were demonstrating masculine characteristics such as competitiveness and muscularity, the relationship between sport, men, and masculinity came into question (Cahn, 1994; Griffin, 1998; Hall, 2002, 2008; Lenskyj, 2003; Daniels, 2009). These gender challenges threatened the

traditional gender order in sport (Griffin, 1998; Hall, 2008). However, women remained the subordinate sex in sport based on gender characteristics associated with femininity.

Gender-Appropriate Sport

From a young age, boys and girls are impacted and informed through cultural factors, such as parents, sports, schools, and toys, to be masculine boys and feminine girls thus emphasizing gender appropriate behaviours that are reinforced over a lifetime (Lorber & Moore, 2007; Martin, 2008; Daniels, 2009). A sport can be labeled as feminine or masculine based on the characteristics that the sport promotes including grace and elegance for feminine sports and strength and aggression for masculine sports (Hall, 2008; Lenskyj, 2003). Based on the sport's culturally predetermined gender association, the individual is meant to participate in a sport that corresponds with their gender (Lorber & Moore, 2007; Lenskyj, 2003; Hall, 2008; Hargreaves, 1993; Daniels, 2009). For an individual to participate in a sport that does not coincide with his/her gender, it is suggested or may be interpreted that he/she is playing a sport that is not gender appropriate according to hegemonic ideals. Women who participate in a masculine associated sport are more at risk of being labelled with hegemonic masculine traits (Hardy, 2015). Furthermore, the gender and sexuality of an individual participating in a sport that is not gender appropriate is often questioned (Lorber & Moore, 2007; Hargreaves, 1993). Participation in a sport that is not gender appropriate often results in the individual being teased or judged by peers for not practicing the appropriate gender characteristics, in addition to other forms of sanction, discrimination and outright violence (Griffin, 1998; Lenskyj, 2003; Hall, 2002).

Hall (2008) argues that women's participation in sports that are considered to be masculine has been thought to damage women's femininity. Sports that are considered to promote feminine characteristics have been deemed gender appropriate and therefore women have been allowed to participate in them with little ridicule or challenge (Morrow & Wamlsey, 2010; Hall, 2008). From the late nineteenth century well into the twentieth century, sports such as tennis, skating, golf, high diving and swimming were considered gender appropriate for women (Morrow & Wamsley, 2010; Hall, 2008). Feminine sports were thought to promote grace, elegance and beauty, which are all characteristics associated with femininity (Hall, 2008). Sports that promote strength, sweat and aggression are associated with masculinity (Hall, 2008). The acceptance of women participating in gender appropriate sport relied on compliance with the gender order and the social construction of emphasized femininity as an athlete. However, Hardy (2015) found that women who play a sport that is not considered gender appropriate "may remain 'real' women if they are able to balance their athletics, femininity and sexuality" (p. 163). Joncheray, Level & Richard (2016) and Joncheray & Tlili (2013) also discuss women having dual identities where they are considered athletes on the pitch and portray emphasized femininity off of the pitch. This further highlights that a female must demonstrate emphasized femininity, outside of sport if not through their participation in sport, to be considered feminine in accordance with social construction.

Rugby – A Traditionally Masculine Game

The first set of rugby Laws and scoring system was developed at Rugby School in Britain around the mid-eighteenth century (Reason & James, 1979). As rugby developed, it became associated with the learning of masculine characteristics in the public and

private schools of the British Empire (Carle & Nauright, 1999). These masculine characteristics included the way in which boys should conduct themselves as well as characteristics needed for business, government, and military work (Chandler & Nauright, 1999; Kidd, 1996). The character building ideology of Muscular Christianity embodied moral Christian values, self-discipline and control, physical and mental toughness, obedience to authority and loyalty to school and country (Morrow & Wamsley, 2010; Kidd, 1996). Boys and young men were exposed to Muscular Christianity in the mid-nineteenth century in order to instill values learned through participation in games and sport to a context outside of sport, such as work and school (Morrow & Wamsley, 2010). These values of Muscular Christianity were instilled into the boys who participated in sport and physical activity in the British public schools of the time through the curriculum as well as the headmasters and teachers (Morrow & Wamsley, 2010; Kidd 1996; Hall, 2002). The influence of Muscular Christianity played a large role in the shaping and meaning of the game of rugby when it was developed (Morrow & Wamsley, 2010).

Men's participation in rugby is reinforced through their ability to learn masculine characteristics, giving males access to more opportunities, rewards and power (Chandler & Nauright, 1999; Carle & Nauright, 1999). The belief that rugby was a way to promote and teach masculinity to boys and men was reinforced by excluding girls and women as participants, as well as spectators (Chandler & Nauright, 1999; Carle & Nauright, 1999). Although rugby was a sport created by men and promoted masculine characteristics, women began to play rugby in North America during the 1970s and 1980s (Chandler & Nauright, 1999; Carle & Nauright, 1999; Shockley, 2005). In comparison, men's rugby

similar to the present day form of the sport was established in the 1880s (Carle & Nauright, 1999). As rugby is a masculine game, women who play rugby are associated with the embodiment of masculinity and the pioneer players in particular were seen to be challenging the gender order. Yet, little research has been conducted on the experiences of the first sanctioned female rugby players in North America.

Women's Roles off the Pitch

Although women didn't begin to play rugby until the 1970s, women did have another role within the game (Carle & Nauright, 1999). In particular, women have been restricted to a supportive role and the domestic servicing of men in rugby (Carle & Nauright, 1999; Chandler & Nauright, 1999; Thompson, 1988; Collins, 2009; Curtin, 2015). Women's participation in rugby was through the washing of rugby clothing, supplying food after matches and at club dinners, taking sons and partners to matches, providing refreshments at matches, repairing the men's playing kit, and emotional support, which accounted for hours of unpaid labour (Chandler & Nauright, 1999; Collins, 2009; Thompson, 1988). Women were most visible at the social and local levels of rugby (Curtin, 2015). Furthermore, while women were "not in any way expected to play rugby, women were encouraged to participate as spectators" (Curtin, 2015, p. 2126).

Women in New Zealand who objected to their domestic and submissive role in rugby organized a protest against the privileges men held within rugby culture. In 1981, a group called Women Against Rugby (WAR) was formed during a South African rugby tour to protest the masculine and misogynist ideals deeply held within the sport (Chandler & Nauright, 1999; Carle & Nauright, 1999; Thompson, 1988). While men were in the stadium watching the matches, women withdrew their domestic services and remained

outside the stadium with various protestors, some being batoned by the Police Riot Squads (Thompson, 1988). Although some women still have a domestic service role in rugby, there has been a significant shift since the 1970s and 1980s to women playing the sport.

Reasons Women Play & Get Involved in Rugby

Many women who play rugby have often played some form of organized sport prior to getting involved in rugby (Shockley, 2005; Joncheray, Level & Richard, 2016). Unlike many other sports, rugby provided women with the opportunity to behave in ways that were not considered feminine through cultural standards (Collins, 2009). Female rugby players experience rugby culture similarly to male players through singing rugby songs and drinking (Collins, 2009). Rugby allows women access to activities which are considered to be in opposition of emphasized femininity. Women are also given the opportunity to behave in a manner not considered to perpetuate emphasized femininity through the contact aspect of rugby. Chase (2006) explains how many women in her study were actively searching for an outlet for their physicality and found through rugby the opportunity to participate in a physically demanding contact sport. Furthermore, the women in Chase's (2006) study stated that tackling in rugby is considered a powerful act or makes the women feel powerful when demonstrating the act of tackling. Rugby provides a space in which women are allowed and expected to be physical, which is not allowed in numerous other women's sports (Chase, 2006). As a result of women's lack of opportunity to play contact sport, obtaining bruises is viewed as prestigious. Bruises signify that the women played hard, were involved in physical play, and contributed to their team (Chase, 2006).

There have been many reasons, twelve, stated in the literature as to why women want to play rugby including: wanting to try something new, challenging and different; for the novelty value; there is less emphasis on your physical appearance; the physical nature of the sport; their friends played; the joy of participating in a sport that requires physical strength and speed; a love for the sport; a sense of empowerment and self-confidence; playing in a team environment; an appreciation of the intellectual aspect of the game; a chance to travel and meet other people; and that male family members and friends played (Chu, Leberman, Howe & Bachlor, 2011; Shockley, 2005; Shockley, 2006; Chase, 2006; Joncheray & Tlili, 2013; Carle & Nauright, 1999). Women's participation in rugby has led to feelings of strength, confidence and power (Chase, 2006). Rugby has led to women feeling proud of their bodies and what they are capable of. As a result of these feelings, women tend to display their identity as a rugby player rather than hiding their bodies in an attempt to conform to the standards of normative femininity (Chase, 2006).

Support and Lack of Support to Play

Support for women's rugby differs depending on an array of factors including the geographical location of the club, the rugby history of the area, participation rates, and other influences that may affect support (Chu et al, 2011). A factor that needs to be discussed when examining the support that female rugby players have is where these women are playing. In areas such as New Zealand where rugby is the national sport and is linked to nationalism in ways similar to hockey in Canadian culture, the support to play is stronger than many other places in the world. Caution should be used when trying to generalize findings from New Zealand in relation to rugby. Rugby is played with higher

participation rates, invokes nationalism, and is well known in New Zealand which creates different perceptions and attitudes towards rugby compared to other regions (Chu et al, 2011).

A study done on the New Zealand Black Ferns by Chu et al (2011) stated that some of the support women rugby players had throughout their rugby careers was a result of rugby being the national sport of New Zealand. Some members of the Black Ferns explained that they had support from their fathers, who would come and watch their rugby games, but didn't watch other sports they had played, because their fathers loved the game of rugby. Some of these women stated that their families needed to get over the initial shock of their sister(s) or daughter(s) playing rugby, but came to support them, partially because of New Zealand's love for the game and rugby being New Zealand's national sport.

Although some female players have been shown to have support from family, friends and the rugby community, support is not always given from these spheres (Fallon & Jome, 2007; Carle & Nauright, 1999). Female athletes have faced many other barriers such as adverse family members and poor training conditions in regard to their participation in a contact sport (Chandler & Nauright, 1999; Carle & Nauright, 1999). Lack of institutional support has also been discussed in the literature (Shockley, 2006). Some women who play rugby have tried to create support from those who have not given it through the use of tactics. The tactics used by female rugby players include proving the source wrong by trying to change their idea about women's rugby and presenting positive information regarding women's rugby (Fallon & Jome, 2007).

Public reactions to female rugby players in a study conducted by Carle and Nauright (1999) ranged from amusement, to interest regarding the format of the women's game, to disgust and general approval from a minority of individuals. The reaction from parents of female rugby players was initially negative in Carle and Nauright's study. Two general reactions were fear of injury and the stereotype that rugby is a man's game, which was held by fathers and family members who had played rugby (Carle & Nauright, 1999). Joncheray & Tlili (2013) also state that family members are often more worried that females will be injured while playing rugby opposed to males, while also being concerned that the women playing will adopt hegemonic masculine characteristics. However, Joncheray & Tlili (2013) explain that the number of injuries in rugby increases with the number of hours of training and the level of play, with no concrete evidence to sustain that there is a difference in risk of injury between men and women.

Support from Male Players

Carle and Nauright (1999) found that male rugby players were superficially supportive, but showed little respect for the women's game. In Carle and Nauright's (1999) study, male rugby players harbored negativity towards female player and responded in a patronizing tone when discussing women's rugby. Markula & Pringle (2006) conducted interviews with male rugby players and found that the majority were supportive of female rugby players. Yet there were male rugby players who, though they stated they supported female rugby, were uncertain as to why females would want to play rugby at all (Markula & Pringle, 2006). These interviewees did not understand why women would want to play a contact sport and stated that female bodies may be too weak to play. Some also expressed their concern about reproductive areas of the female body

getting injured (Markula & Pringle, 2006). Although the majority of men supported women's rugby, not all men's rugby players interviewed in Markula & Pringle's study showed the same level of support. There were a couple of male rugby players in the study who stated that women's rugby is only played by butch and lesbian women. These individuals believed that if a female rugby player considered themselves to be heterosexual and other characteristics that are associated with emphasized femininity, then those women should not be playing rugby as it conflicts with what is considered to be gender appropriate (Markula & Pringle, 2006).

In Shockley's (2006) research, she examined the emergence and decline of women's rugby in the American Southeast during the years of 1974 to the 1980s. Shockley (2006) stated that some women's teams started with the help of a few of the players from their respective men's teams. Women borrowed old jerseys from the men and often the women's coaches were part of the men's team. Shockley suggested:

It is possible that because men's rugby was so new at this point in the 1970s that the male players did not have the opportunity to develop the kind of hyper-masculine traditions ...located in the centuries-old United Kingdom tradition of rugby. (2006, p. 136).

Therefore, the men were more accepting and supportive in America. Although some male players were supportive in Shockley's research, others were resentful of the women's intrusion into what was considered a man's game. This resulted in the women enduring hostility from some men and were either ignored or excluded (Shockley, 2006).

Appearance of Female Rugby Players

Women, under the pretext of emphasized femininity, are supposed to have a feminine appearance and female athletes are no exception to this cultural belief. Since rugby is considered a masculine sport, participation in rugby is thought to create a more

masculine appearance rather than a feminine one (Fallon & Jome, 2007). Female rugby players noted in a study by Fallon and Jome (2007) that players were not considered feminine enough in appearance if particular physical characteristics such as height, shoulder span, athleticism, musculature, body shape, and facial features were read as masculine. The shape and size of the body of a female athlete challenges and opposes the cultural idea of what a female body should look like as it contradicts the social construction of emphasized femininity and a traditional feminine body type (Chase, 2006).

The appearance of female athletes is scrutinized in all sports with female athletes being described as unattractive, unfeminine, and unnatural (Griffin, 1998). Krane (2001) discusses the challenges that women have in the sport of boxing. Some female boxers feel the need to prove themselves based on their skill while maintaining an appropriate feminine image (Krane, 2001). There are social consequences, both good and bad, depending on how feminine or masculine the body and appearance are of a female athlete. Female rugby players who are more feminine receive more social acceptance to play rugby than those who look more masculine (Fallon & Jome, 2007). However, rugby players that look too feminine have a difficult time regarding acceptance on a rugby team. Women who are thought to be too feminine may be teased or regarded with doubt about their skills as a rugby player until they prove they have the skill required to play (Fallon & Jome, 2007; Joncheray & Tlili, 2013), while women who portray a majority of hegemonic masculine characteristics risk losing feminine attributes (Joncheray & Tlili, 2013). Chase (2006) examines how female rugby players have both a female and athletic body as their bodies are disciplined through sport and also disciplined through normative

ideals of the female body, which contradict one another. As a result of this contradiction, Chase (2006) has found that some female rugby players challenge normative femininity while on the field, while conforming to normative femininity off the field.

Female Trespassers

Sport is often viewed as the antithesis of femininity (Schacht, 1996). Men have dominated nearly all aspects of sport throughout its history. As such, it can be understood why participation in sport came to be associated with characteristics such as power, strength, aggression, dominance and violence (Hardy, 2015). Since sport has been used to promote hegemonic masculinity, sport has been understood to be male territory, making female athletes trespassers in a masculine domain (Griffin, 1998; Hall, 2008; Lenskyj, 2003). The construction of sport as a male domain has caused numerous barriers for women. A fear of feminization has developed in sport in response to women's participation in a domain where masculinity is supposed to be learned (Davison & Frank, 2007). Griffin (1998) argues that women's participation in sport reduces the importance and exclusivity of sport as a means for males to learn masculinity. The fear that female athletes would jeopardize the institution of sport has resulted in the marginalizing and trivializing of women's sport as lesser than men's sport in order to maintain sport as a masculine activity (Griffin, 1998).

Sexual Orientation

The sexuality of female athletes has come into question since women have started participating in sport. Cahn (1994) notes "given the long association between athleticism and male virility, it was not surprising that there should be speculation about lesbianism among athletes" (p. 164). In particular, women linked to a masculine sport have been

labeled as sexual deviants who may acquire masculine sexual characteristics because of their participation (Cahn, 1994). Women who played sports were not only thought to be unattractive, but also to be not attracted to men and would therefore prefer women, which went against the belief of what it meant to be feminine and female (Cahn, 1994; Hargreaves, 1993). There was a fear that the masculine characteristics associated with sport would transfer to the women who played sports, making them become more like men sexually, which would include women becoming passionate, uncontrolled, and assertive (Cahn, 1994).

The fear of lesbianism is greater the more masculine the sport is considered to be, but can occur in other sports not traditionally viewed as masculine as well (Cahn, 1994; Hargreaves, 1993; Schippers, 2007). Since rugby is considered to be a highly masculine sport, this fear of lesbianism is elevated regarding female rugby players. Yet, some lesbian female athletes have found support regarding their sexuality through sport. Women who have not been comfortable expressing their sexuality in other spheres of society have found solace in confiding in their teammates as friends or romantic interests (Cahn, 1994; Shockley, 2006).

Individuals who fear lesbianism have used homophobia to perpetuate the gender order and limit women's sport engagement. When a female has been identified as being masculine or unattractive, she knows she has crossed the gender boundary from being considered feminine to masculine or has challenged male privilege (Griffin, 1998). Women who do not consider themselves lesbians find the need to show and express their femininity so their sexuality does not come into question (Griffin, 1998). This fear and stigmatization of being labeled a lesbian and the need felt to portray femininity puts

limitations on female athletes' sport experience and can make women defensive about their sexuality and athleticism (Griffin, 1998). This fear of being thought of as a lesbian has also caused some girls and women to forgo participation in sports (Fusco, 1995, as cited in Davidson & Frank, 2007).

Response to Stigmas Associated with Sexuality

When stigmas associated with the sexuality of a female athlete arise, literature has shown that there are multiple ways that an athlete may respond including confronting the stigma (Griffin, 1992) or apologist behaviour which includes “any behaviour by female athletes that emphasizes hegemonic femininity” (Hardy, 2015, p. 155). Apologist behaviour also includes demonstration of defensive othering, identifying with the dominants, propping up the dominants, and normative identification (Ezzell, 2009; Gill, 2007; Krane, 2001). Apologetic behaviour is in response to masculine and/or lesbian stereotypes associated with women's involvement in sport (Hardy, 2015).

Griffin (1992), describes how female athletes have confronted the sexist and heterosexist stigma through strategies such as education campaigns, lesbian/queer visibility and solidarity between athletes who are heterosexual and those who are homosexual. However, another strategy for female athletes responding to sexist and heterosexist stigma is an apologist approach. Female athletes use an apologist strategy by emphasizing traditional female gender roles to compensate for their participation in a masculine coded sport (Ezzell, 2009; Broad, 2001; Griffin, 1992, Markula & Pringle, 2006). Hardy (2015) found that female athletes are more likely to display apologetic behaviours if they are heterosexual athletes and athletes who are uncomfortable with their

sexual orientation. Female newcomers to the sport of rugby are also more likely to exhibit apologetic behaviours than experienced players (Hardy, 2015).

Defensive othering is one apologist approach that has been used by female athletes. Defensive othering “reinforces the power of stigmatizing labels by arguing that the label is true for other members of their social category, but not for themselves” (Ezzell, 2009, p. 114). An example of defensive othering is a female rugby player stating that other women who play rugby may be masculine, butch, or lesbians, but that particular player is not, so she is still maintaining her appropriate gender role (Ezzell, 2009).

“Identifying with the dominants” is another tactic associated with the apologist strategy. Dominants are those who are members of the dominant group, which in this case are male rugby players. Ezzell (2009) maintains that identifying with the dominant group allows members of the subordinate group to place themselves above other members in their subordinate group. Some female rugby players in Ezzell’s (2009) study placed themselves in a privileged position above other women, and even other female rugby players by identifying themselves with male rugby players. Some female rugby players were noted saying that they were tough and aggressive, which are characteristics that are associated with the dominant group – male rugby players. Identifying with the dominants allowed these female rugby players to “claim a higher status” (Ezzell, 2009, p. 116) than others in the subordinate group.

Another apologist tactic is the propping up of the dominant group. By propping up the dominant group, boundaries are maintained between the dominant and subordinate group (Ezzell, 2009). The manner in which the female rugby players from Ezzell’s (2009)

study propped up the dominants was by stating that although they are fit, strong and aggressive, male rugby players are still superior athletes. Propping up of the dominants differs from identifying with the dominants as this apologist tactic continues to fortify the superior position of male rugby players. Female rugby players who have propped up the dominants state that although they have characteristics that are associated with male athletes such as strength and aggressiveness, these characteristics are still not of the same caliber as male rugby players. By these female rugby players stating that the dominant group is superior athletes, it maintains the gender hierarchy and also diminishes fears of the observers that women are challenging the traditional gender roles of sport.

The final tactic used regarding apologist strategy to respond to stigmas associated with sexuality is normative identification. Normative identification is an individual “aligning themselves with the norms and values prescribed by dominants for a subordinate group” (Ezzell, 2009, p. 118). Female rugby players were shown to use normative identification through a display of emphasized femininity and heterosexuality, as well as emphasizing their fitness. With the inclusion of female athletes, there became a need for these women to portray their femininity in order to reassure those watching that they are in fact feminine (Lenskyj, 2003). One of the easiest methods to reassure observers that the female athlete is still feminine and heterosexual is through her appearance (Hall, 2002), such as the clothing she wears after a match, showering after a match and applying make-up (Ezzell, 2009). Some female rugby players also used fitness as a means to achieve normative identification as well as performative discrimination. Through working out and accomplishing fitness, female rugby players in the study done

by Ezzell (2009) stated that they felt as though they were better than other female rugby players because they had a smaller body size than most female rugby players.

Summary

Sport is a gendered activity with rugby not being an exception. The history of rugby is one of an elite and exclusively male sport, with long standing traditions. The long standing traditions of rugby, which includes teaching males how to portray hegemonic masculinity, has assisted in rugby being characterized as a masculine sport. I have chosen to use a radical feminist lens as it aligns with my research. Radical feminism as a theoretical disposition informs the necessity of different and separate for a host of reasons largely based in power differentials and distributions. These power differentials and distributions are based in the assumption of inferiority regarding women in elite sport in general and 'men's sport' in particular.

CHAPTER 3

RESEACH DESIGN

This chapter focuses on the overall design and the particular methods I used to carry out my research on the experiences of the pioneer female club rugby players in Ontario.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this case study is to explore the experiences of the inaugural female club rugby players in Ontario. Using a radical feminist lens, I explore what these pioneer female rugby players faced through their participation in what is considered to be a masculine sport. Through this research, I hoped to discover why these women wanted to play rugby and their experiences playing rugby during the formative years of their women's rugby teams at their respective clubs in Ontario. I was eager to explore barriers these pioneer players faced in relation to gender inequity and their sexual identity through their engagement in rugby. Finally, I was able to learn of the support systems these female pioneer players had in regard to their participation in a masculine sport.

Research Questions

- 1) Why did the pioneer female rugby players in this study decide to play a sport that contradicts emphasized femininity and was previously only played by men?
- 2) What type of support did pioneer female club rugby players in Ontario have from their family, friends and club members?
- 3) What barriers and obstacles did these pioneer female rugby players face through their participation in a 'masculine' sport?

- 4) What were the experiences of the women who participated during the formative years of women's club rugby teams in Ontario?

Qualitative Research

Qualitative researchers are interested in how people perceive their world and the experiences they have (Merriam, 2009). Furthermore, the goal of qualitative research is to understand and describe the experience of those who have been involved in the phenomenon being studied (Merriam, 2009). Specific characteristics are associated with qualitative research and include a natural setting; a focus on the process, understanding, and meaning of the research; the researcher as the primary instrument of data collection and analysis; complex reasoning of the data through inductive and deductive logic; participants' meanings; emergent design; reflexivity; holistic account; and a product that is richly descriptive (Creswell, 2013; Merriam, 2009).

Creswell (2013) states that “qualitative research begins with assumptions and the use of interpretive/theoretical frameworks that inform the study of research problems addressing the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem” (p. 44). Qualitative researchers use qualitative methodologies and methods for inquiry, the collection of data in a natural setting sensitive to the individuals participating in the study, and data analysis to establish patterns or themes to study the phenomenon (Creswell, 2013). Once completed, qualitative research should include “the voices of participants, the reflexivity of the researcher, a complex description and interpretation of the problem and its contribution to the literature or a call for change” (Creswell, 2013, p. 44).

Using qualitative research allows the researcher to increase his or her understanding of a phenomenon through verbal and nonverbal data, to check the data

collected with the individuals participating in the study to ensure accuracy of interpretation, and to explore unusual or unanticipated responses from participants (Merriam, 2009). Qualitative researchers are also able to gather data to build concepts or theories rather than testing hypothesis (Merriam, 2009). Qualitative researchers are able to build toward a theory from their observations and the data collected to better understand a particular phenomenon from those who have experienced the issue being studied (Merriam, 2009).

A Feminist Paradigmatic Framework

It is difficult to find a clear definition of the term paradigm as the individual who developed the concept, Thomas Kuhn, used the term in a variety of ways (Guba, 1990). Although a lack of a clear definition for the term paradigm can be viewed as problematic, it can also be considered intellectually useful as the term can then be reshaped as the understanding of its meanings improve (Guba, 1990). It is from this explanation of the term paradigm that Guba (1990) justifies the use of a generic definition of the term, stating that a paradigm is “a basic set of beliefs that guides action” (p. 17).

Creswell (2013) maintains that “feminist researchers see gender as a basic organizing principle that shapes the conditions of their lives. The questions feminists pose relate to the centrality of gender in the shaping of our consciousness” (p. 29). My research explores the experiences of women who have played what is considered to be a masculine sport. As such, my inquiry reflects a central aim of feminist research, which is to draw on women’s lived experiences in a way that legitimates women’s voices as sources of knowledge (Liamputtong, 2009). Furthermore, radical feminist theory has shaped my research in that my own experiences in rugby first brought me to this study. I

have been involved in the rugby community since I was a child and began playing rugby at the age of 14. As my father is a builder in the community and my sisters played rugby, I felt supported by my family to play as a result. My friends, who consisted of athletes themselves, were also supportive of me playing rugby. It wasn't until I played rugby at university that I encountered someone who was shocked and disgusted that I played rugby. I was taken aback from this interaction which lead me to inquire what women who played during the inaugural years of women's rugby in Ontario had to endure. Feminist research also advocates reflexivity, which I will engage in throughout the research.

METHODOLOGY

Case Study

For this research study, I have used a case study approach. Merriam (2009) defines case study research as studying a case, or cases, in detail to allow the researcher to develop descriptions and themes that have come from the data collected of the case(s). A case is a single unit, around which are boundaries (Liamputtong, 2009; Merriam, 2009). Through studying cases associated with a bounded system, meanings and new understandings are developed in relation to specific events. A case study allows for holistic and meaningful characteristics of individuals' experiences to be understood and examined (Yin, 2009). However, a bounded system cannot be separated from the context from which it is taken (David, 2006). Stake (2005) states "a case study is both a process of inquiry about the case and the product of that inquiry" (p. 444). A case study approach will be used as the focus of my research, the first sanctioned female club rugby players in Ontario is a bounded system.

Stake argues that there are three types of case studies: intrinsic case study, instrumental case study (1995), and collective or multiple case study (2005). My research uses an instrumental case study as the focus of this type of case study is on a specific issue and uses a case or cases to illustrate the issue being studied (Stake, 1995). As my research focuses on the experiences of women who played on the first sanctioned club rugby teams in Ontario, the use of an instrumental case study is justified.

METHODS

Participants and Sampling Strategy

Participants included in this study were individuals who played within the building years of their women's club rugby teams in Ontario. The year in which they began playing for a club team varied depending on when their respective clubs established a women's team, but generally ranged from the 1970s to the 1990s based on the literature I collected. The women included in my study may have had prior experience playing rugby at other levels such as high school, collegiate, provincial or national levels preceding their involvement playing at the club level, or their first exposure to playing rugby may have come from participating on their respective club team. It was only necessary for participants to have played women's club rugby within the first three years of their team forming at their respective clubs to meet the criteria and be eligible for my study.

Participant Recruitment

To address the challenge of finding individuals to participate in my research, I used gatekeepers to gain access to research participants. Gatekeepers are individuals who are part of or have connections to the population being studied, and can distribute

information about the research to potential participants (Liamputtong, 2009). I contacted the 64 club presidents in Ontario to inquire about potential participants and received 16 responses. Out of the 16 responses, two were from presidents of clubs that did not have a women's team. Out of the 64 club teams in Ontario, 18 do not have a women's program and two are women's only clubs. Through the use of gatekeepers, snowball sampling occurred. Snowball sampling is usually used to find populations that are considered to be hidden or vulnerable. Liamputtong (2009) discusses how snowball sampling can also be used to find a population that may be difficult to locate. I was able to recruit four participants through the use of gatekeepers. A couple of the women first recruited through club presidents knew others who were interested in taking part in my research, which is known as snowball sampling (Liamputtong, 2009). Since I did not know who all the participants would be and their locations, I relied heavily on gatekeepers who are in the rugby community to assist with recruiting participants. Contacting the club presidents was the first approach that I used to establish gatekeepers.

I was able to obtain a list of all club presidents in Ontario along with their contact information from Rugby Ontario's website. I proceeded by contacting all 64 club presidents via email to inquire if they had any contact information for women who played on their club's first women's team. From the club presidents who responded to my original email and provided contact information of potential participants, I was able to find four women who agreed to participate in my research, as previously mentioned. Two additional women were recruited through the use of snowball sampling. Finally, I obtained two additional women who were willing to participate in my study from my own connections that I have within the rugby community.

Gaining Access

Gaining access to a population can be a difficult and tedious process. With my involvement in the rugby community, I was able to use my connections to decrease the difficulty associated with gaining access to the population being studied. As a researcher, I contacted a few people who I already had relationships with in order to act as gatekeepers. These individuals helped me gain access to women who met the criteria needed to participate in my study and who were willing to join my research.

Participants

A total of eight women participated in my research. The women I interviewed started playing rugby at different ages, which ranged from 18 to 26. The women are now in their 40s and 50s, with some continuing to play rugby. The clubs in which the women played for also differed and were predominately located in either the Toronto or Ottawa areas with the exception of one participant who played in the Niagara area. Out of the eight women interviewed, five played for clubs that had both women's and men's teams, two played for a women's only club and one participated on a women's team that was in conjunction with an originally men's club; however, her team transitioned to become a women's only club due to challenges and conflicts that occurred. The years in which the women's club teams formed also varied. The earliest formation of a women's club team in Ontario was in Ottawa in 1979. Of the eight women who participated in my research, two began playing rugby for the Ottawa Banshees, a women's only club, which was the first women's team in Ontario to form. Women's rugby teams continued to form in the years following, specifically between the 80s and early-mid 90s from what was experienced by the women I interviewed. The remaining six women who participated in

my research began their rugby careers playing for clubs in the Toronto area for Ajax Wanderers, Saracens and Yeomen; Ottawa area for Ottawa Indians; and Niagara area for St. Catharines.

Data Collection

Many types of methods can be used with case study research to collect data which include: in-depth interviews, focus groups, observation, diaries, questionnaires, documents, and artifacts (Creswell, 2013; Liamputtong, 2009; Merriam, 2009; Thomas, 2011). For my thesis, I used in-depth interviews to collect data.

Interviews

In-depth interviews are face-to-face conversations with individuals who have detailed knowledge on the topic being study. In-depth interviews allow the participants to share their lived experiences of marginalized groups, which usually produce thick description of information (Liamputtong, 2009). A researcher interviews individuals because of an interest in other people's stories as a means to learn and gain knowledge of the issue being studied and making meaning of the individual's story (Seidman, 2013). To be able to gain rich, thick description from the participants, it is imperative to have interview questions that are well thought out and posed in a clear manner for the participant. Researchers approach in-depth interviews as a way to help uncover the participants' views, to allow his or her perspective to "unfold as the participant views it.... Not as the researcher views it" (Marshall & Rossman, 2006, p. 101). In-depth interviews are social interactional events that do more than extract data that already exist inside individuals selected as informants. In-depth interviews encourage participants to think about their experiences in new ways and formulate ideas and opinions as the

interview unfolds. Hence, in-depth interviews are both generative and formative (Van den Hoonaard, 2012). Furthermore, taking a semi-structured approach to the formulation of the interview questions allowed for more flexibility in terms of phrasing and follow up as well as allowing the participants to set the tone and flow of the interview (Fontana & Prokus, 2007). As well as being consistent with an in-depth interview approach, this is also consistent with feminist approaches to inquiry. To become more familiar with the interview process, I conducted a pilot interview. I interviewed a woman who played on one of the first women's club rugby teams in Quebec. During the pilot interview, I was able to lessen my anxiety of interviewing while gaining critical and practical knowledge of the interviewing process, to which I had little prior experience. I found conducting a pilot interview assisted me with the way in which I conducted the interviews for my research, both in my approach and questions asked.

Liamputtong (2009) discusses how the interview process should be conducted. Upon arrival to the interview, the researcher should engage in conversation that will make the participant feel comfortable. The research then needs to be explained to the participant. The researcher should describe what the purpose of the research is and how the participant's knowledge will be beneficial to the research. As the researcher, I informed the participants of my own participation in women's rugby and the rugby community to help establish rapport. I noted throughout the interviews I completed that the participants spoke more in-depth and with less hesitation once I informed them of my own rugby background. The decision of whether the participant wanted their identity to remain confidential or known was discussed after the interview concluded. I offered the option of the use of pseudonyms to all of my participants. Seven of the eight women who

participated in my research stated they did not want to use a pseudonym. When expressing that they did not need/want pseudonyms, the participants stated two main reasons. The seven women who did not use pseudonyms either were not bothered by the use of their actual names or were proud to have their names and experiences attached to my thesis as it aids in the research on women's rugby. I chose the pseudonym of the remaining participant rather than allowing her to choose her own pseudonym to make the process more efficient. At the beginning of each interview, consent as well as permission to record the interview were given by the participant.

During the actual interview, I took brief notes to support context and memory. Throughout the interview, the notes that I focused on taking were those relating to the environment and the way in which the participants answered particular questions; if their mood changed or if they answered a specific question in a particular way. I documented the aforementioned elements, which were then included in my transcripts. These inflections and nonverbal communications do not necessarily translate through the audio recording of the interview, which is why as a researcher I took these notes during the interview and included them in the transcripts. As I do have a rugby background, I conducted semi-structured interviews rather than structured interviews, which also aligns with feminist research methods. Semi-structured interviews allowed me to better understand the narratives of the participants while also maintaining thick descriptions as I found this style of interview to garner more rich information.

At the end of each interview, I gave a brief summary of the main points discussed to make sure that I interpreted the participants' narratives correctly in order to help achieve credibility. I also asked the participants if there was anything they would like to

add to the interview that they felt was either not discussed or should be elaborated. After the interview, I debriefed with the participants, thanked them for their participation and reaffirmed that their knowledge is important and how their knowledge will contribute to the research I am conducting.

As a researcher, I had some apprehension regarding the amount of time that was needed for the interviewing process. Interviews can be very time consuming the research must obtain participants, conduct interviews, and transcribe the interviews. I also had some concern about my lack of experience as an interviewer and the questions that I posed as a novice researcher. I found my confidence grew throughout the interview process and I was better able to actively listen to the participants which allowed me to feel more comfortable while conducting the semi-structured interviews.

Data Analysis

The goal of data analysis, put simply is “the process of making sense out of the data” (Merriam, 2009, p. 175). After completing an in-depth interview with a participant, I transcribed the data obtained from the audio recording. I transcribed the data recorded verbatim, which allows for data analysis to occur (Liamputtong, 2009). To ensure that my findings are dependable, I used multiple data analyses strategies to analyze the data I collected; these strategies included inductive within-interview analysis, inductive cross interview analysis and deductive analysis (Quinn Patton, 2015; Lincoln and Guba, 1985). In order to establish triangulation within the analysis process and to build in forms of internal cross validation/confirmability, I divided my data sets into three distinct groupings so that an actual transcript of a pioneer was present in each grouping. Group A’s three interview transcripts were from Dee, Helen, and Katherine; Group B’s three

interview transcripts were from Suzanne, Annemaree, and Jane; Group C's two interview transcripts were from Barb and Gina. For Group A, I performed an inductive analysis using a close reading of each transcript noting salience, pattern and revelatory phrases as they pertained to my research questions. Identifying revelatory phrases found in the transcripts from the participants "support and illustrate the themes that emerged." (Cramp, Courtois, Connolly, Cosby & Ditor, 2014, p. 400). For Group B, I performed an inductive analysis looking for patterns across the three transcripts guided by the internal interview questions themselves. For Group C, I performed deductive analysis generated by the prominent thematics of the research literature. Then I looked for confirmable patterns across the three groupings and related these to my research questions. The dividing into distinct groupings was guided by suggestions for internal confirmability from Quinn Patton (2015) and Lincoln and Guba (2013). I elaborate on the specifics of each analysis strategy in the paragraphs below.

To initiate the analysis of my data, I began with the three interviews from Group A that I inductively analyzed using salience, patterns and research questions (SPR) to guide the analysis. As stated by Merriam (2009), inductive analysis is the collection of data by researchers to build concepts, theories and hypotheses. Using this first strategy, I began with reading an interview as a whole to familiarize myself with the data. I continued my analysis by reading through the transcript a second time while recording notes in the margins of the transcript. These notes refer to data in the transcript I thought was valuable and important to make note of. The final step in relation to the SPR approach I used was to read through the transcript a third time and note codes and patterns that I could cluster into themes. Coding data is simply attributing a shorthand

designation to particular aspects of your data to be able to easily retrieve specific pieces of the data (Merriam, 2009). I used this approach for three of the eight transcripts.

The second method of data analysis I used was inductive cross interview comparison on the three transcripts in Group B. With this method I compared data gathered from three transcripts in Group B by examining participant responses to my interview questions. To begin this method, I again started by reading the data as a whole. I then completed a second read of each transcript while noting points regarding the data in the margins of the transcript that I believed to be important. Finally, I went through each of the three transcripts used for cross interview comparison and coded answers given by my participants to each of the interview questions I asked. This approach allowed me to analyze the data related to my interview and research questions across cases to determine common patterns as well as unique data.

The third and final strategy I used for data analysis is deductive analysis. Deductive analysis allows the researcher to test pre-conceived notions or typologies (Merriam, 2009). This method of analysis is used to determine if the data found in my study confirms or refutes the research in the literature. I began this method of analysis by reexamining my literature review to determine which findings from the literature and that align with my research questions, to use to deductively analyze the data. For the two transcripts in Group C, I again began by reading the data as a whole. Once completed, I referred to the themes in the literature chosen to analyze the data. I read through the transcripts a second time and coded the data based on themes in the literature that relate to my research questions. Finally, I read through the data a third time and recorded salient information. Throughout the data analysis process, I continually referenced my research

questions to ensure that the themes which emerged from the data were relevant to my research questions. I then used the three data analysis strategies in a cross data set comparison to confirm salience, pattern and theme, as well as to confirm or disconfirm the related literature typologies.

RIGOUR & TRUSTWORTHINESS

Rigour refers to the quality of the research and is used to evaluate qualitative research (Liamputtong, 2009). A definition of rigour given by Tobin and Begley (2004) is “the means by which we demonstrate integrity and competence, a way of demonstrating the legitimacy of the research process. Without rigour, there is a danger that research may become fictional journalism, worthless, as contributing to knowledge” (p. 390). Rigour or trustworthiness can be used to suggest that a study is truthful to its findings based on the descriptions given by participants (Liamputtong, 2009).

To ensure that a study is trustworthy, it must be carried out ethically and fairly (Padgett, 2008). Rigour can be achieved in qualitative research by ensuring that other aspects of qualitative research are met, such as: credibility, transferability, reflexivity and triangulation. My research achieved rigour and depth through multiple methods. The interviews I conducted garnered rich information as I did not end the interviews when the anticipated length of the interviews was surpassed. It was evident that the women I interviewed wanted to discuss certain topics in more depth. As a result, I did not conclude the interviews until the women had discussed as many topics and details as they wanted. I reached saturation of the data during analysis and the findings primarily aligned with the research literature.

My role as the researcher and my status as an insider also impacted the data I obtained as I am a woman who is part of the rugby community. A different researcher who does not have my background in rugby would not have achieved the same results as I did. My status as an insider allowed the women I interviewed to be more candid with their discussions as it was evident that there was a bond/commonality between me and the participants. By ensuring the aforementioned aspects of qualitative research are met, it confirms that my research is trustworthy.

Credibility

Credibility refers to the consistency and dependability of the research based on the data collected rather than insisting that other researchers get the same results (Merriam, 2009). Regarding credibility, Merriam (2009) states “the question then is not whether findings will be found again but whether the results are consistent with the data collected” (p. 221). Tobin and Begley (2004) maintain that credibility asks if the explanation of data fits the description given by the participants. It is possible to have several interpretations of the same data, but all interpretations can be credible and dependable if the findings of a study are consistent with the data presented (Merriam, 2009). I will achieve credibility through internal triangulation and cross comparing the three strategies that will be used for analyze the data.

Transferability

Transferability or the applicability of the study will give insight as to the generalizability of the findings (Liamputtong, 2009). Transferability asks the question: “To what degree can the study findings be generalized or applied to other individuals or groups, contexts, or settings?” (Carpenter & Suto, 2008, p. 149, as cited in Liamputtong,

2009). Qualitative research is concerned with applying the knowledge gained to the population from which you are sampling and other similar individuals, groups and situations rather than attempting to apply the findings to a larger population (Carpenter & Suto, 2008; Padgett, 2008; Sandelowski, 2004). I will attain transferability through a robust description of process and a robust description of my findings.

Reflexivity

Reflexivity allows the researcher to reflect critically and articulate their biases, dispositions, assumptions and thoughts while providing insight into the research processes (Fonow & Cook, 1991; Liangputtong, 2009; Merriam, 2009). Merriam (2009) discusses the importance of the researcher critically reflecting on him or herself as a researcher: “Such a clarification allows the reader to better understand how the individual researcher might have arrived at the particular interpretation of the data” (p. 219).

Reflexivity allows the reader to understand how the researcher’s values and biases influence the way in which the research is conducted and the data that is collected (Maxwell, 2005). Furthermore, reflexive writing as a qualitative researcher allows the reader to better understand the influences behind the way in which the research was conducted, the data that was collected and how the researcher interpreted the data (Maxwell, 2005; Merriam, 2009). Merriam (2009) states:

Authors are being called upon to articulate and clarify their assumptions, experiences, worldview, and theoretical orientation to the study at hand. Such a clarification allows the reader to better understand how the individual researcher might have arrived at the particular interpretation of the data (p. 219).

It is important to know the researcher’s background and how it informs the researcher’s interpretation of the data, and what the researcher gains from the study. As Wolcott (2010) said:

Our readers have a right to know about us. And they do not want to know whether we played in the high school band. They want to know what prompts our interest in the topics we investigate, to whom we are reporting, and what we personally stand to gain from our study (p. 36, as cited in Creswell, 2013).

Reflexive writing can be thought of as having two parts. First, the researcher discusses his or her experiences with the issue being studied which involves relaying past experiences. The second part is to discuss how the researcher's past experiences shape the interpretation of the issue (Creswell, 2013). The researcher must be aware how his or her experiences may potentially have shaped the findings, the conclusions, and the interpretations of a study (Creswell, 2013). Reflective writing is imperative to feminist research as reflexivity is not only encouraged, but sought out. Qualitative researchers are much more self-disclosing about their qualitative writings today than they were a few years ago as it is no longer acceptable to an objective, distanced qualitative researcher (Creswell, 2013). All researchers shape the writing that emerges based on their biases, assumptions and thoughts; therefore, qualitative researchers need to be open about it in their writings (Creswell, 2013).

The use of feminist theory also allows and encourages the researcher to be reflexive when conducting a study (Liamputtong, 2009). Through reflexivity, a qualitative researcher is able to reflect critically and articulate his or her biases, dispositions, assumptions and thoughts while providing insight into the research process (Fonow & Cook, 1991; Liamputtong, 2009; Merriam, 2009). Reflexive comments can be placed at the beginning of the study, in a methods discussion, throughout the study, or they may be at the end of the study in an epilogue (Creswell, 2013).

Being reflexive and able to share my biases, thoughts and assumptions in my research is important as I have both biases and assumptions being a female rugby player who is cognizant of how I have had to negotiate my own gender. Prior to collecting any data, I believed that the main obstacle my participants encountered would be related to sexual identity. I had this bias through my own experience as a female rugby player as most of the challenges I have faced were due, in large part, to others' judgments on my perceived sexuality. I ensured that the participants were aware of my rugby background and my status as an insider during the interviews so I could be reflexive. After explaining some of my biases, it was evident that the women who I interviewed had different experiences from mine. This included the main obstacle of gender inequity. I became aware, due to the character and passion of my participants, of the importance to remain loyal to them to ensure their voices would be clearly heard. To allow the women's experiences to be presented through their descriptions and words, I began my analysis inductively which made me acutely aware of my initial biases, specifically my biases prior to data collection.

Triangulation

Triangulation is a method used to strengthen qualitative research through the use of multiple methods during data collection (Liamputtong, 2009). Triangulation helps to ensure consistency and dependability (Merriam, 2009). There are four types of triangulation that include: "the use of multiple methods, multiple sources of data, multiple investigators, or multiple theories to confirm emerging findings" (Denzin, 1978, as cited in Merriam, 2009, p. 215). Triangulation in my research is present through the

use of multiple methods and multiple sources of data. Specifically, I used multiple levels of data analysis, as well as multiple participants, which triangulate my research.

Researcher's Role

The role that I have taken as a researcher is one of an interviewer and as a rugby player. Through my role, I had to find individuals who could act as gatekeepers to allow me to gain access to individuals who played within the building years of their women's club rugby team in Ontario. Once I gained access to participants, I was responsible for scheduling interview dates and times with each participant. During the interview process, I discussed my connection to the rugby community as a player, referee, coach and administrator. I found that my status as a female rugby player allowed me to build rapport with the participants, which helped to elicit rich description from their responses. Furthermore, stating my connection to rugby also ensures that my research is reflexive. With having an insider's perspective to the rugby community, it was important to remember that my role during interviews will be that of an interviewer. Although it is important to be reflexive, I also wanted to allow the participants to share their stories and experiences without much interruption. It was important to remember my role as a researcher while conducting interviews and throughout the research process to ensure that I did not overlook details that may be overshadowed by my own biases and assumptions.

CHAPTER 4

FINDINGS

In this chapter I will present my findings from each distinctive analytic approach. That is, I will consolidate my within interview inductive approach, the combined comparison of my findings from cross interview by question inductive comparison, and my findings from cross interview deductive approach. The findings from my cross interview by question inductive comparison can be found in my appendices while the bulk of the deductive analysis finding will be discussed more fully in Chapter 5.

Salience, Patterns & Research Questions (SPR)

In this section I will discuss salient information that came from the combined data analysis of all eight interviews. I will also introduce patterns that were evident while analyzing the data of all the interviews conducted. Finally, I will present how the data analyses relate to my research questions.

Salient Information

Throughout the interviews, all of the women mentioned or discussed *how rugby is a unique sport, not only in terms of its Laws, but how the Laws are exactly the same for men and women*. It was also stated that *rugby is unique as it is a contact sport that women can play*. The women interviewed also stated that there is *something different about rugby from other sports which is hard to put into words and makes rugby a unique experience*. Jane (Interview 6, March 31, 2015, p.3) stated “...the environment that rugby offers with the kind of women that are drawn to playing rugby is pretty amazing and so that’s been something that I haven’t been able to replicate anywhere else.” Furthermore, Suzanne mentioned an awareness of being part of something different and special: “I

think the women knew they were part of something special. They knew that they were different and they took pride in being different.” (Interview 4, July 9, 2014, p.5).

The pioneer women also explained how rugby has impacted their lives in a positive manner. One of the ways in which rugby influenced their lives was through the life long friendships made. The informants stated during multiple interviews that their closest friends today are those with whom they played rugby. Not only did rugby impact the people these women chose to keep in their company, but *the connections made throughout the world due in part because of rugby was a significant finding as well.*

Katherine (Interview 3, July 1, 2014, p.9) explained: “I always present rugby as a worldwide sorority. In that, when I’m on a team or I go some place and I say I’m a rugby player, it’s an automatic door opener. It’s actually better than a sorority for a college or university because it’s worldwide.”

Katherine (Interview 3, July 1, 2014) discussed how *the larger culture impacted women’s rugby* during its inaugural years. Katherine explained that during the late 1970s to the 1980s there was a change occurring in sport. There was *more funding* being allocated to women’s sport and a move to focus on women and girls in recreation. Katherine also voiced *race issues* that occurred abroad while playing rugby. She explained that having people of different races, including herself, on the team resulted in discrimination at times during the 1980s when traveling abroad to play in areas in the United States. Katherine discussed how discrimination not only occurred off the field through primarily verbal comments, but on the field as well by some referees they encountered. It was noted that racial comments tended to occur abroad versus in Ontario and the rest of Canada. One of the limitations of radical feminism is that it is essentialist

and does not examine race and class. It was evident that the main issue was gender, more specifically gender inequity. However, it would be beneficial to examine Katherine's comment regarding racial discrimination abroad through a different lens.

Further salient information discussed by Katherine was regarding *being a lesbian and playing rugby*. Katherine (Interview 3, July 1, 2014, p.18) stated:

We had a couple other women who are either now dating or were coming out and you found that the women's team was accepting. You had to be really respectful of other's comfort level so you were respectful when you were on the road, staying in hotels. You were respectful in the shower rooms and those type of things. But I mean that's just what you have to do anyway in any kind of sport when you don't want people to feel uncomfortable for whatever reason. I never felt in any way ostracized.

A very interesting point of discussion that occurred during the interviews and is unique to women's rugby are the needs of women that the males in the community had not encountered prior to women starting to play. There were *concessions at times that needed to be made for women that were foreign to the men participating*. One example of this was discussed by Katherine and was related to another player and the need to breastfeed while playing:

I remember when she had her first child and she was breastfeeding. Well, that really threw some of the refs because I remember one game in particular it was half time and she ran off to breastfeed and the ref was yelling 'Players take the field, players take the field!'. So we replied 'We're going to start, we'll play short.' and he said 'I want the players on the field!' and was getting pissed off. We then said 'Excuse me sir, but she's breastfeeding. We'll play short and she'll give you a sign and you can just call her back onto the game.' He wasn't impressed with that at all but it's like what's the problem?' (Interview 3, July 1, 2014, p.17)

From the early years of women's rugby, there were *obstacles they had to encounter due in part to gender equity and sexuality*. Some women interviewed stated they became feminists as a result. Suzanne (Interview 4, July 9, 2014) stated "So those early years of

playing rugby made me a fairly staunch feminist.” (p.15). Although there were women who were willing to approach the men to try to gain gender equity, some were not. There were some women who did not want to approach the men for better equipment or more field space because of how that may have been interpreted by the men. Annemaree (Interview 5, March 28, 2015, p.4) explained “A lot of the girls who had boyfriends were content to play in the end zone, or content to have the balls that were striped or deflated because they didn’t want to be that bitchy girl. They didn’t want to be the angry lesbian that wanted equal treatment.”

A pattern discussed by the women interviewed, including Annemaree (Interview 5, March 28, 2015) and Gina (Interview 8, September 29, 2015) was *the type of women recruited to play rugby*. The women recruited often did not perform characteristics associated with emphasized femininity. Annemaree and Gina discussed that athletes were recruited from a variety of sports to join their inaugural rugby teams. Both elaborated that the decision to recruit athletes led to early success of their teams as these women had fundamental skills that could be transferred over to rugby. Annemaree (Interview 5) also discussed how *women who often fouled out or were penalized in other sports were usually targeted to play rugby as contact is a legal part of the game*.

Rugby culture is a large part of the sport. After games, players will often drink and eat together while singing rugby songs. The women were no exception to this; however, Gina (Interview 8, September 29, 2015, p.11) discussed how *some women felt like they ‘cleaned up the rugby act’ as the men seemed to be better behaved when the women were around*. The men were also willing to give tasks and roles to the women so they weren’t as burdened. Annemaree stated:

As soon as the women are willing to do the work behind the scenes the men would say ‘Go ahead. You can be secretary, treasurer, social convener. Go ahead and do all this work.’ So, it didn’t take long for the majority of the executive to be women, but assigning a female president was never going to happen. At the end of the day the major decision making was still handled by the men. (Interview 5, March 28, 2015, p.11)

Some women interviewed played for a women’s only club. Katherine (Interview 3, July 1, 2014) expressed why she and others felt it was important to have a solely female club. Katherine (Interview 3) and Jane (Interview 6, March 31, 2015) explained that by having a women’s only club they: ensured access to full field space; were able to raise their own funds; were able to be involved with the men on their own terms; and were able to run their club and team as they saw fit, especially in terms of finances and decision making. Katherine (Interview 3, p.4) stated “Being an independent women’s club, we could raise our own funds, we had our own board, we did our own thing and we just weren’t having to deal with the political bullshit of rugby in Ontario with the men.”

While reflecting on the data analysis, an aspect that I thought important to note was *all the women interviewed had very similar personality characteristics*. The women interviewed seemed to be *strong willed and determined to do what they wanted regardless of others’ opinions of them*. I believe this shared characteristic is one of the reasons why these women were part of their women’s team during those formative years. They were determined to make their program successful regardless of public opinion and lack of support.

One point I noted throughout the interviews was the lens through which the women reflected on their participation during the pioneer days of women’s rugby. Suzanne (Interview 4, July 9, 2014), Jane (Interview 6, March 31, 2015), Barb (Interview 7, April 24, 2015) and Gina (Interview 8, September 29, 2015) all stated that *they were*

remembering a lot of the positive aspects of the time and not necessarily all of the negatives. Suzanne (Interview 4, p.11) explained:

When you look in hindsight, you always remember the good stuff. You don't remember the crappy stuff and it's been so long now that it's kind of hard to remember some of the stuff that I would hate about things. All the times about the way the women were treated.

Furthermore, Barb (Interview 7, p.11) stated "I am one of those people that tend to remember the positives anyway. I'm sure we had to push for things."

Patterns

A pattern evident across all the data I analyzed was that *gender inequity was the largest concern of the women participating in rugby during its inaugural years*. Prior to conducting interviews, I believed that issues regarding sexuality and gender would be at the forefront of obstacles and challenges endured by the women. Although sexuality and gender issues were discussed, the far more prevalent topic was gender inequity. Issues regarding facilities, jerseys, decision making and lack of funding were all discussed by the pioneer players in each interview conducted.

Another pattern that I discovered from the data analysis was *the age at which the participants began to play and played until*. Most women began playing rugby in their early to mid twenties, with the youngest being 18 at the time of participation in club rugby. Although this is considered a late start in comparison to other sports, most women interviewed played into their forties with two playing into their fifties.

A third pattern evident in the data I analyzed was *all the women who participated in my research had an athletic history prior to their participation in rugby*. Each woman interviewed participated in at least one, but more often participated in multiple sports before starting to play rugby. Some identified themselves as being more aggressive in

other sports. Dee (Interview 1, June 4, 2014, p.6) stated “I’ve always been, for a lack of a better term, a tom boy.”

Although many of the pioneer players stated that their clubs were quite supportive of having a women’s team, it was evident from the data that *two groups showed the most resistance to women playing rugby*. The first being the ‘old boys’ who are typically older gentlemen from other countries such as: England, Scotland, Wales, etc., who view rugby as a traditional men’s game not to be invaded by women. The second aspect of resistance came from those on the *administrative side of the game* who prevented women’s access to equity of resources.

The women interviewed discussed many obstacles they encountered while participating during the first few years of their women’s team. These obstacles included: attitudes some had towards women who were playing, dismissiveness from the men’s team, access to field space and field times, lack of good quality equipment, use of facilities that were built for hosting only men’s sides, finding and retaining coaches, obtaining good quality referees, finding competition and maintaining numbers.

Suzanne (Interview 4, July 9, 2014) mentioned that there were people who were opposed to them playing and were quite vocal about their disdain. Some men’s teams were not interested in having a women’s side and as a result were dismissive to the women. This tended to result in limited access to field space and the need to find alternative times to practice from the men in order to not be relegated to the in-goal area of the pitch. As the men’s teams were already established, the women’s side tended to receive the old equipment from the men. Finding and retaining a coach also presented challenges. Men who were willing to coach were often not able to as the women

practiced on the same nights as the men. As a result, some women ended up not only playing, but coaching as well. Lack of good quality referees was also a concern. The women interviewed stated they often received the older referees who were on the verge of retiring which affected the quality of their games. Finding competition was also a challenge due to the lack of women's teams in Ontario throughout the 1970s to 1990s. This resulted in the women having to travel often to play. With the obstacles listed above that were a result of sexism and gender inequity, it was a challenge to maintain numbers to have a full women's side.

An issue mentioned by all women and was at the forefront of their discussions was the lack of facilities for women. As the facilities, such as clubhouses and playing fields, were built at a time when only men were playing, there were no washrooms, change rooms or showers that were solely available to women. As a result, the women encountered incidents specifically around showers. Women described how they would have to wait until the men were finished playing before they could shower, or they would opt out of showering all together. Women would have to confirm the men were not using the change rooms/showers before entering and some teams would have their women take turns patrolling the entrance to ensure no men entered. Even with these practices, women still described incidents where men walked in on them and even went as far as showering with them. Suzanne (Interview 4, July 9, 2014, p.10) stated "They did not want to make allowances for us. They just didn't feel they should have to."

A challenge unique to three of the women was that they were part of a women's only club. Although it was stated by Suzanne and Jane that there were many positives associated with being a women's only club, there were a few obstacles they encountered

that were unique to their clubs. These women mentioned they became limited in terms of their infrastructure. Suzanne stated that her club had the right ideas and concepts to develop infrastructure, but they did not have critical mass to deliver their concepts, which resulted in burnout from their members (Interview 4). Furthermore, Jane explained “I think there was a feeling that the infrastructure that we had in place maybe wasn’t enough for what it would take to run a club.” (Interview 6, March 31, 2015, p.6).

The women I interviewed discussed who they felt gave the most resistance to women playing rugby. Two of the woman stated they did not feel as though there was a lot of resistance given to having a women’s team. Although two of the participants mentioned that they did not recall any resistance, they also discussed that reflection regarding this issue may not be fully accurate. Participants stated that their lack of recollection of negative aspects of their participation may be due to their focus on the positives and being a successful women’s team. It was also discussed that resistance tended to come from other women, specifically from some girlfriends and wives of male players (Suzanne, Interview 4, July 9, 2014)

The pioneer players discussed how their desire to play a ‘masculine sport’ was questioned as other believed that they should not be playing rugby. Annemaree explains that they were told that ‘...women had no business being a part of rugby.’ (Interview 5, March 28, 2015, p.12). As a result, participants felt as though they always had to prove themselves each time they took the field as a method to gain acceptance. Playing a ‘masculine sport’ also brought their sexuality into question at times. Sexuality was not only questioned by those in the rugby community, but those in other realms such as work as well (Annemaree, Interview 5). Suzanne (Interview 4, July 9, 2014) and Jane

(Interview 6, March 31, 2015) further discussed how some people automatically assumed women playing were gay because they were playing a contact sport. Suzanne (Interview 4) explains "...there were girls on our team that were gay and so it wasn't that we really perceived it as an insult, but it pissed us off that people automatically painted us with that brush just because we played a contact sport." (p.11). Jane (Interview 6) states that even those who were supportive were also concerned with women playing a 'masculine sport' since they were building muscle to play a contact sport and some were concerned that the women may become 'butchy'.

Difficulty arose from playing a 'masculine sport' as there were no female role models to admire. The pioneer players were not able to observe other women who were playing and therefore had to rely on each other, fostering a sense of unity and sisterhood. Without having access to women who played before them, these women had to learn with each other what was required of them in a contact sport and the level of assertiveness needed to play a good quality game.

When they encountered disapproval, most women interviewed had a similar response to how they dealt with the negativity. *The women would attempt to gain approval by showing others that they worked and played hard and were capable of playing good rugby.* Unlike some other sports, rugby does not differ in any way between the men's and women's game. The Laws of the game and equipment used are exactly the same. This was another way that the women showed they would not change the game of rugby by playing.

It was evident that the positives of playing rugby outweighed the obstacles the pioneer players had to endure. The women stated that they enjoyed the camaraderie and

community while participating in the formation of a women's team at their club. Both Suzanne (Interview 4, July 9, 2014) and Annemaree (Interview 5, March 28, 2015) stated that the camaraderie was fantastic because the women were all rookies together and learning the sport together. Suzanne (Interview 4) explains that no one knew what they were doing so you were happy you made it through the game and would laugh and joke about mistakes you made with the other women. Jane (Interview 6, March 31, 2015) also expressed her enjoyment of not being attached to a men's team.

Finally, it was apparent that *the sense of community in rugby is important to those who participate in the sport*. All participants mentioned that the rugby community is what makes the sport unique to others. The rugby community is one that looks after and takes care of each other whether that is during a game or off of the pitch. The sense of community is one of the reasons why many women stated that their closest and longest friendships are with those with whom they played rugby.

Research Questions

- 1) Why did the pioneer female rugby players in this study decide to play a sport that contradicts emphasized femininity and was previously only played by men?

Dee (Interview 1, June 4, 2014) stated that she was recruited to play rugby because of her athletic abilities in other sports while Helen (Interview 2, June 6, 2014) and Katherine (Interview 3, July 1, 2014) stated that they began playing rugby because they had a friend who played and encouraged them to go out. The data analysis showed that there were numerous reasons why the pioneer players decided to play rugby, which include: the physical component of the game, team sport, fast pace of the game, the Laws are exactly the same for the men and the women, fitness component, inclusive to all body

types, it was fun, the camaraderie, the community, everyone learning together, social aspect of the game, inclusive to many abilities, and it was accepting and broke down barriers. Helen (Interview 2, p. 4) explained:

It was the girls who didn't always play sports and felt that they couldn't play anything because they hadn't been playing soccer since they were six or whatever. They knew they could do rugby because *nobody* knew how to play rugby. So you got some of these girls coming out that you just would never ever expect in a million years. And I thought it was quite inclusive, so I was quite thrilled to see that – surprised and thrilled. It was quite awesome.

The physical component was also a main reason why the women wanted to play rugby.

Katherine (Interview 3, p.20) stated:

Let's face it, people don't say this, but it's really satisfying to have a great physical outlet. When you've got stress in your life and you can go out and you've got this hard physical sport and it's person against person, it's player against player, it's team against team, it is a really healthy thing. So often men get to play football, men get to box, men get to do all these things and now you're seeing over the years that women are able to do these sports and it's healthy to have those outlets.

When confronted as to why the women were playing rugby, Dee (Interview 1, June 4, 2014 p.8) said the following:

When I was asked by a male player 'Why do pretty girls like you want to play rugby?' I just looked at him and said 'Why do you want to play rugby?' And he said 'Well you know, it's camaraderie and it's a good physical sport.' I replied 'Well, that's the same reason why we do it.' When he asked if I was worried about being hurt, I responded 'Don't you ever worry about getting hurt? You're the one that's getting hit by a 250 pound guy, not me'.

- 2) What type of support did the first female club rugby players in Ontario have from their family, friends and club members?

Most family members were supportive of the women playing, especially when a family member had also played rugby. Helen (Interview 2, June 6, 2014) stated that her

parents were supportive of her playing, but concerned for her safety while participating in rugby. Katherine (Interview 3, July 1, 2014) explained that although her parents were supportive, she knew other women who hid playing rugby. When asked about support from siblings, Dee (Interview 1, June 4, 2014) said they were not surprised that she was playing rugby. When asked about support from partners, Dee stated “I’m pretty strong willed, but having his support made it that much easier.” (Interview 1, p.6). Some friends did not understand why the women wanted to play and thought they were crazy for wanting to participate. Suzanne (Interview 4, July 9, 2014, p.7) explained

It’s on the field *and* off the field and it’s part of your community, they become your family. It becomes all encompassing. So you live it, you breath it, you eat it and I think friends that aren’t into rugby get tired of hearing about it. So they sort of drift away and you find very quickly that your entire community that you hang out with are all rugby people.

Friends who were athletic were not surprised of them playing and were quite supportive.

People in their life outside of rugby, specifically coworkers, tended to be concerned for their safety and the possibility of domestic violence due to bruises and marks that were visible. Annemaree (Interview #5, March 28) discussed that she had to confront questions of domestic violence from various realms due to bruises and marks acquired from rugby. Furthermore, Katherine stated “In the summer there was a lot more long sleeves and long skirts. I did have a supervisor when I worked in Toronto. She saw bruises on my arm and she would ask me about my partner, not knowing that I played rugby.” (Interview 3, p. 8). Other reactions to women playing included awe and amazement as discussed by Jane:

People meeting you outside of rugby kind of have this shocked look of ‘Oh my god, you play rugby?’ And half the time it’s actually quite awe inspiring. I think people are genuinely amazed that it’s something you do, which is a nice kind of reaction. The other kind of reaction is often that ‘You play rugby? Women

shouldn't play rugby. That's crazy you play full contact. You play against other women? Are the rules adjusted?' Those are all the questions that you get. (Interview 6, March 31, 2015, p.4)

Support from club members varied depending on the club you played for.

Katherine states:

I think some of the men's clubs certainly didn't want to have a women's side with them at all. They didn't want to be associated with women's sides. I really do think the biggest impact that happened for the women and where the men started changing was when the recreation department started granting money to sports development. Then the men started realizing through Trillium Funding and other grant money that if they had a girl or a women's side, this was a positive thing. And that's when we saw the changes when the men's sides were starting to develop women's clubs because they realized there was funding available with it (Interview 3, July 1, 2014, p.5).

Men's teams were supportive for most part. Dee (Interview 1, June 4, 2014) and Helen (Interview 2, June 6, 2014) discussed how the men embraced the inclusion of women. The executive also seemed to be supportive with the most resistance being from 'old boys' at the club. Helen (Interview 2) also went on to discuss how players from the men's team ended up coaching the women's side. Katherine (Interview 3, July 1, 2014) stated that some male coaches looked at the women's team as a dating pool. Katherine (Interview 3, p.10) also explained a very different reaction than Dee from the men's team: "The philosophy of how the men played rugby and how they conducted themselves was not what the women wanted to be affiliated with. So the women separated on their own."

Those in administrative roles were not always supportive and showed this in different ways. Katherine (Interview 3, July 1, 2014) stated that the women usually would be given referees that were not high quality. The women often got relegated to small parts of the pitch or would not get field bookings. If anything needed to be rescheduled, it was

the women who had to change their schedules, not the men. A method used to counteract the lack of support around them, the women used each other to build one another up and support other women playing (Katherine, Interview 3).

Most of the women stated that although there were some supportive ‘old boys’ there were quite a few who were not. Dee stated:

There were a lot of the older people, the old boys and it sounds stereotypical, but a lot of the British and the Irish didn’t understand. I think the word that they used was that we were going to ‘bastardize’ the game. They would say ‘You’re going to make a mockery of our game.’ They were concerned that we would make rugby a sissy’s game (Interview 1, June 4, 2014, p.7).

Once some of the ‘old boys’ recognized that the women did not change the Laws of the game and played good rugby, they became more supportive (Dee, Interview 1).

Some rugby people were vocal that women should not play rugby and other times this disdain was demonstrated not by words, but by actions and behaviours. Derogatory remarks were made at times claiming that rugby was too dangerous for women to play and they would not want their sisters or daughters playing (Katherine, Interview 3, July 1, 2014). There were times where people were so derogatory that Katherine (Interview 3) recalled not feeling safe in some places: “We did *not* go anywhere unless we were in a solid group. I really felt like we’re not getting a welcome wagon here.” (p.6). Katherine also mentioned that although there were some men in the rugby community that were against women playing, this was not the case for all men. Some men took on the role of a coach or referee and were quite good with the women. Others encouraged their daughters or sisters to play.

Although there were some negative comments and attitudes directed at women who played rugby, it did not stop them from participating. Helen (Interview 2, June 6,

2014, p.16) stated: “We had the right to play! And because the girls wanted to play, more to the point.” The women interviewed also stated that they realized that they could not convert all those who did not support them and learned not to waste their time on people who were close-minded.

3) What barriers and obstacles did these pioneer female rugby players face through their participation in a ‘masculine’ sport?

The pioneer female players interviewed all discussed gender inequity as being the primary barrier they faced while playing the traditionally ‘masculine’ sport of rugby. Originally, I had anticipated sexuality being at the forefront of obstacles and barriers for the women who played during the formative years of women’s rugby in Ontario. The women explained that their sexuality was brought into question on occasion; however, it was a secondary concern. During the interviews it was evident that gender inequity was the prevalent obstacle for the women to overcome. Gender inequity for these female players came in the forms of: access to facilities, lack of field space, use of old jersey and equipment, lack of high quality of referees, lack of available coaches, lack of available funding. Annemaree (Interview 5, March 28, 2015) explained that she and the women she played with wanted equity between women’s and men’s team. She understood that men had larger numbers, and therefore did not want equal but wanted equitable treatment instead. To receive equitable treatment, the women had to be outspoken. Receiving equitable treatment in regard to facilities, specifically showers, was a difficult feat as Suzanne explains “It always seemed like we were the second class citizens. So getting women’s showers, getting anything for women, was a hassle and some of the clubs had

women's teams and some of them didn't. The men didn't feel they should have to accommodate." (Interview 4, July 9, 2014, p.15).

Access to showers was an obstacle for these women that I did not foresee and one that I could not ignore as a researcher. All of the women interviewed mentioned access to women's only facilities, such as showers, toilets and change rooms, as an obstacle. Lack of facilities for women meant that their privacy was being disrupted. Dee (Interview 1) stated:

And the guys, 99% of the guys knew that after the game, that you don't go downstairs to the showers. The showers are there and the girls are in there showering. So we would go into the showers and there were probably eight or nine of us in there one day in these open showers and one guy strolled in completely naked, stood there and used the showers with us. So really, what are you going to do? And you know what, nobody even said a word to him. We just ignored him. And showered. You know, you want to take a look buddy, go for it, take a look. Because you're going to look like the bigger jerk when you go downstairs and tell people what you did. (p.11).

Furthermore, Helen explained:

There was one big shower room that the men could use and we'd have to wait until they were all finished. We were like 'This is crap.' And also there was no doors on the showers. So a girl would have to stand outside and of course all the guys would try to walk by, but I mean, we didn't care but it's not exactly conducive or encouraging to women to play sports. So we had big, big battles in getting the showers. They wouldn't give them to us because it was work. It was extra work and money. I was kind of running against more of the old boys. In the end we struck a deal if we raised 'x' amount of money, then they would match it or they got some government money to match what we raised, but it was up to us. (Interview 2, June 6, 2014, p.10).

Finally, Katherine elaborated:

We often would have to take over a change room. And when we wanted to shower we would have women at either end of the hallway pretty much aggressively keeping the guys away. There were no doors on the shower rooms so we would take the unhinged doors taken off of another room and put that out so the women could have privacy. And we pretty much had to just say 'Screw you. We're going to have a shower. We paid our money to be here and play and we want our privacy and we want a change room.' You really had to advocate

strongly for your rights, for field time, for quality reffing, for getting a change room. (Interview 3, July 1, 2014, p.4).

The women interviewed explained their teams' responses to the lack of women's facilities. Those interviewed stated the following responses: women acted as if this did not affect them and ignored those who disrupted their privacy (Dee, Interview 1, June 4, 2014); spoke with their men's team to confront the individual who impeded the women's privacy and deal with the situation (Dee, Interview 1); strongly advocated for their rights to their own facilities (Katherine, Interview 3, July 1, 2014); and took it upon themselves to fundraise part of the money needed to install women's facilities and showers (Helen, Interview 2, June 6, 2014).

Access to high quality referees was also an issue discussed that women's teams encountered. Some interviewees did have positive experiences with the referees they received. However, access to high quality referees was usually quite difficult. The women explained that they often received referees who were at the end of their careers and were not very active during the game. Katherine stated:

You can have really hard aggressive rugby. When you have really hard aggressive rugby I think sometimes the ref would penalize a woman or discount it more than they would with men playing rugby. I still think there's a little bit of inequity in what the guys do or what they should do versus what the women do or should do and sometimes you do see that in the ref. (Interview 3, July 1, 2014, p.22).

Field space was another barrier that created gender inequity for the women playing. The women's teams were not always able to get field bookings. The women who were part of a men's club were often relegated to the in-goal areas of the pitch and were moved off of the main field space. Money and funding was mentioned as an issue for the women interviewed. Dee (Interview 1, June 4, 2014), Helen (Interview 2, June 6, 2014) and Katherine (Interview 3, July 1, 2014) stated that the women had to do their own

fundraising and work as a collective unit to obtain financial resources. It was also stated that, at times, money fundraised by the women did not always get allocated to the women's team. Women would reach out to one another from different teams, which helped to make the women's community stronger and was used as method to combat gender inequity (Suzanne, Interview 4, July 9, 2014).

Another barrier for women to play rugby was the amount of travel necessary to partake in the sport. Since there was a lack of women's teams during the 1970s-1990s, women had to do a vast amount of travelling to play another team. At times, this also meant playing in other countries such as the United States of America. Helen explained:

We would drive five hours to play a game and drive back again. When you went a bit further we would stay in somebody's house and we'd crash on the floor. That was what we had to do to play rugby. We'd travel far and wide (Interview 2, June 6, 2014, p.15).

The women would often carpool with one another to ensure everyone was able to attend the games as noted by Dee: "When you're having to travel, and we were really spread out around that point, people car pooled. You would get together and make sure that everyone had a ride." (Interview 1, June 4, 2014, p.11).

Although homophobia was not a primary barrier, the women did discuss how sexuality impacted the game for women. The women interviewed explained that homophobic comments were made at various rugby events regarding their participation in rugby. Dee (Interview 1, June 4, 2014, p.10) stated:

You would have lots of dyke comments thrown at you. Not lots, I shouldn't say lots, but you would have those comments from a few people. There would be the odd guy that would shout it out and typically it was done around mainly the other guys that supported it.

This action is a form of hegemonic masculinity as the men were making comments as a performance for other men to emphasize their compulsory heterosexuality.

When comments were made against the women's sexuality and negative attitudes were demonstrated towards the women who played rugby, most of the women interviewed would ignore the comments or laugh them off. They stated they just wanted to play rugby and didn't care what others thought. Jane (Interview 6, March 31, 2015, p.9) explained:

Most times I would talk about it (sexuality) as, don't make assumptions about the sport. So don't assume that because the sport is more masculine that the only women who play are not necessarily attractive or attracted to other women. Also, why does it really matter? I think that was always my question, who cares? Why does a sport have to define the sexuality and vice versa?

Suzanne described how some women tried to feminize themselves while playing rugby to lessen the questions regarding their sexuality:

Well the men on the whole, they always dismissed you and they always liked to conveniently assume that you were all gay. You'd watch the girls go, and I did it myself, the girls would go through these different phases of dealing with that. We'd go through this phase where you'd see people trying to be a little more feminine. For example, I used to wear my hair really short, and then I got so tired of the word 'dyke' being thrown at me that for one year I grew my hair out. I didn't even realize I had done it until about half way through the year I was thinking 'Jesus, I hate playing with long hair. What the hell am I doing?' and then I thought 'Gee, am I reacting to their comments?' So I cut it off again, but you'd see other girls do the same thing and they'd just get uncomfortable with it all. But, I think if anything it just, it polarized your support and your focus on your own club and your own teammates. You developed the 3 Musketeers attitude, 'All for one and one for all', and you'd just kind of say 'Bring it! We're here, we're not going anywhere and you can either accept us or not.' (Interview 4, July 9, 2014, p.11).

It was also stated by Suzanne (Interview 4, p.5) that other aspects, such as jerseys, had an impact on how they were perceived: "Of course the first year our jerseys had to be

powder blue because we're a girl's team and if they *could have* said pink they would have. It was a very feminine colour."

- 4) What were the experiences of the women who participated on the first sanctioned women's club rugby teams in Ontario?

All the women interviewed stated that they have a positive and fun experience while playing during the inaugural years of women's rugby. They enjoyed the physicality of the game and working together to achieve a goal while using their bodies. Dee (Interview 1, June 4, 2014), Helen (Interview 2, June 6, 2014) and Katherine (Interview 3, July 1, 2014) all stated that they first learned about rugby by watching the boys team play at each of the respective high schools.

Each woman stated that rugby had a significant impact on their lives through the following eight reasons: rugby gave them more self confidence, they became more fit, rugby became a passion, it provided them with life lessons, they became much more assertive, believed in themselves and were not afraid of being victimized. Some of the women discussed that prior to playing rugby they thought it was a rough and dangerous sport. Rugby players were 'rude, lewd and crude' (Katherine, Interview 3, July 1, 2014). However, after playing she realized how great the people were, even though they were still 'rude, lewd and crude' and how much fun it was to play rugby.

Deductive Analysis

In this section I will present how the data analysis finding relate to the literature examined. I have focused on topics from the literature that directly relate to my research questions.

1) Reasons Women Play & Get Involved in Rugby

In the literature, Shockley (2005) stated many women who play rugby have often played some form of organized sport prior to getting involved in rugby. The women interviewed all mentioned that they played other organized sports prior to becoming involved in rugby. The pioneer players stated that they played a variety of sport including: hockey, basketball, volleyball, soccer, flag football, badminton, netball, cross country, and track and field.

Collins (2009) discussed how unlike many other sports, rugby provided women with the opportunity to behave in ways that were not considered feminine through cultural standards. Barb (Interview 7, April 24, 2015) and Gina (Interview 8, September 29, 2015) stated that they were able to act in such a way that defies social norms by playing rugby. Gina (Interview 8, p.2) explained:

I just found it so exciting and also for me being a female, being Italian, being catholic, it was everything I wasn't supposed to be. So I was like 'Yeah, I've got to play this game!' It was against all the rules.

Collins (2009) also mentioned that female rugby players experience rugby culture similarly to male players through singing rugby songs and drinking. Both Barb (Interview 7) and Gina (Interview 8) said they participated and highly enjoyed social events and taking part in rugby culture. Most notably, going out with teammates and drinking/partying after matches.

There have been many reasons stated in the literature as to why women want to play rugby including: wanting to try something new, challenging and different; for the novelty value; there is less emphasis on one's physical appearance; the physical nature of the sport; their friends played; the joy of participating in a sport that requires physical

strength and speed; a love for the sport; a sense of empowerment and self-confidence; playing in a team environment; an appreciation of the intellectual aspect of the game; a chance to travel and meet other people; and that male family members and friends played (Chu, Leberman, Howe & Bachlor, 2011; Shockley, 2005; Shockley, 2006; Chase, 2006; Joncheray & Tlili, 2013; Carle & Nauright, 1999). Barb (Interview 7, April 24, 2015) and Gina (Interview 8, September 29, 2015) stated they wanted to play rugby for reasons including: the physicality (contact) of the game, the camaraderie, the social aspect (culture) of the sport, the strength and speed needed to play, the intellectual aspect of the game, the finesse needed to play, the Laws were the same for the men's and women's game, they had male family members and friends who played, decreased emphasis on physical appearance, the competitive nature of the game, opportunity to travel, it was fun, playing rugby went against gender norms. Gina (Interview 8, p.14) explained:

I found for me, because it was supposed to be traditionally masculine, I found it extremely empowering. It was the only sport, the only contact sport, where the Laws were exactly the same for the men and women and that was empowering.

In regard to the social aspect of rugby, Gina (Interview 8, p.11) stated: "Another thing that I found very amazing is here you are going this distance, you're tackling each other, you're doing all this stuff and then they feed you and buy you a drink." Both women stated that they continued to play as it empowered them and gave them more self-confidence.

2) *Support and Lack of Support to Play*

Researchers state that although some female players have been shown to have support from family, friends and the rugby community, support is not always given from these spheres (Fallon & Jome, 2007; Carle & Nauright, 1999). Gina (Interview 8,

September 29, 2015) stated that she received support from the men's team, coaches, executive and some 'old boys'. However, she believes this support was due, in part, because the women practiced on different nights than the men, which lessened the gender inequity felt. Another reason given to explain the support received was that the women brought in additional members and money into the club, which allowed the club to profit more from the women's inclusion (Gina, Interview 8). Athletic family members and friends tended to be supportive (Barb, Interview 7, April 24, 2015 and Gina, Interview 8, September 29, 2015). The women interviewed also found support from other women who played and resulted in a sisterhood between them.

Although support was given by some, as described in the literature, it was not given by others. These people included: the 'old boys'; some executive members; men's players who verbalized their disdain for women playing and those who were jealous of the women's success; friends who were not rugby players; partners; and female partners of male players (Barb, Interview 7, April 24, 2015 and Gina, September 24, 2015). The women stated that lack of support tended to come mostly from the 'old boys' at the club who believed the women were dismantling the traditions of rugby.

Also described in the literature is that female athletes have faced many other barriers such as adverse family members and poor training conditions in regard to their participation in a contact sport (Chandler & Nauright, 1999; Carle & Nauright, 1999). The pioneer players described how they did not receive high quality referees; they experienced a lack of jerseys and equipment; were relegated to the in-goal areas of the pitch; they did not receive access to women's only facilities; and played in the last game of the day, which took place at 4:30pm after all the men's teams had played (Annemaree,

Interview 5, March 28, 2015; Barb, Interview 7, April 24, 2015; and Gina, September 24, 2015).

In the literature, researchers explained how some women who play rugby have tried to create support from those who have not given it through the use of tactics. The tactics used by female rugby players include: proving the source wrong by trying to change their idea about women's rugby and presenting positive information regarding women's rugby (Fallon & Jome, 2007). Barb explained that she wanted those who did not support women's rugby to see them play. This helped to gain support from those who did not originally give it, as they were able to see women playing rugby well and abiding by the Laws of the game (Interview 7, April 24, 2015). Barb, Dee and Katherine also conveyed why they enjoyed rugby: the contact and the camaraderie (Barb, Interview 7; Dee, Interview 1, June 4, 2014; Katherine, Interview 3, July 1, 2014). Gina explained how some women, including herself, tried to present positive information about women's rugby, but if it wasn't accepted they just moved on rather than wasting their time trying to change someone's opinion that could not be changed (Interview 8, September 29, 2015).

Carle and Nauright (1999) stated that public reactions to female rugby players in a study they conducted ranged from amusement, to interest regarding the format of the women's game, to disgust and general approval from a minority of individuals. The women I interviewed explained that some people were supportive and impressed while others were concerned, shocked or disapproved of them playing. Gina (Interview 8, September 29, 2015) and Katherine (Interview 3, July 1, 2014) stated that coworkers tended to be the most concerned when they saw bruises on the women. Most female players from my interviews had to defend themselves and reiterate that they were not

being physically abused by partners or family members. Gina also explained how men, both rugby players and non rugby players, who were not supportive reacted:

At that time there were a lot of men and people watching that maybe didn't respect women's rugby. I remember an instance where they were on the sidelines shouting to 'Rip her shirt! Rip her shirt! We want to see some tits and ass!' (Interview 8, p.7).

Gina continued: "We were at a bar and some guy started talking to us... I told him that we won [a rugby tournament] and he walked away and didn't talk to us." (p.14).

Another aspect of the literature regarding support of women playing rugby was the reaction from parents of female rugby players as initially negative in Carle and Nauright's (1999) study. Two general reactions were: fear of injury and stereotype that rugby is a man's game, which was held by fathers and family members who had played rugby. Dee (Interview 1, June 4, 2014) and Helen (Interview 2, June 6, 2014) confirmed there was a fear from the parents of female players that they would be injured. Barb (Interview 7, April 24, 2015), Jane (Interview 6, March 31, 2015) and Gina (Interview 8, September 29, 2015) all stated that there were family members who were not fully supportive of them playing as a result of rugby being considered a 'masculine' sport. Jane (Interview 6) explained that a male family member was concerned that her physique would become too masculine from playing rugby, while Gina (Interview 8) explained how her playing sports did not coincide with a family member's beliefs on how a female should act.

3) *Sexual Orientation*

It is explained in the literature that since the emergence of women participating in sport, female athletes have had their sexuality questioned. Barb (Interview 7, April 24, 2015) explained that her sexuality did not come into question often, which may have been

a result of her marrying early on in her playing career. Furthermore, Barb stated that questions regarding sexuality came mostly from other women rather than men. Other participants in previous interviews discussed that sexuality did come into question, but it was not something they focused on or were bothered by. The data analysis findings showed there was more emphasis and discussion on gender inequity than sexual orientation.

4) *Response to Stigmas Associated with Sexuality*

When stigmas associated with the sexuality of a female athlete arise, literature has shown that there are multiple ways that an athlete may respond including: Confronting the stigma (Griffin, 1992) or apologist behaviours. Apologist behaviours include: defensive othering, identifying with the dominants propping up the dominants and normative identification (Ezzell, 2009; Gill, 2007; Krane, 2001). Barb (Interview 7, April 24, 2015), Gina (Interview 8, September 29, 2015, Suzanne (Interview 4, July 9, 2014) and Katherine (Interview 3, July 1, 2014) expressed how they confronted the stigmas associated with sexuality. They wanted those who did not support women's rugby to see them play. This helped to gain support from those that did not originally give it as they were able to see women playing rugby well and abiding by the Laws. Katherine (Interview 3) stated the pioneer female players strongly advocated for their rights. Gina (Interview 8, p.7) explained "...at first they watched because they wanted to see tits and ass. Then they saw we could actually play rugby so we felt like there was a change. All of a sudden there were 'Oohs' and 'Ahhs' and claps...". In terms of apologist behaviours mentioned by the women, propping up the dominants and normative identification were discussed. However, the women did not mention anything that related to defensive

othering or identifying with the dominants. Dee (Interview 1, June 4, 2014) mentioned how the men from their club were able to handle issues that stemmed from other men's teams regarding the women playing, rather than the women handling the matter. This aligns with propping up of the dominants. Suzanne (Interview 4) demonstrated normative identification when she mentioned she let her hair grow longer, subconsciously, to look more feminine before cutting it off when she realized she was reacting to people's negative comments. However, Helen (Interview 2, June 6, 2014) stated that some women responded opposite to normative identification and acted more masculine:

I just didn't care. We almost became too masculine as a defense. So we acted very *boyish* and we'd sing the rugby songs and we'd make up our own versions. We were shocking. All the stuff that the boys did we would do better. I think that was a defense against that argument. The stronger we were and outrageous we acted then that would be the defense. (p.13).

Other responses that were not discussed in the literature, but were mentioned during the interviews included: no response, ignoring the judgments of others, distancing themselves from those who did not agree with them playing rugby, trying to earn respect with their level of play on the pitch and defending the game. It should be noted that the response of 'no response' was not a form of timidity, but rather a deliberate silence that was intended as a silent 'Fuck you'. Gina stated how they ignored the judgments of others:

I think that we were a bunch of athletic women who wanted to play. 'We've got a field, we've got a ref, just play and it just doesn't matter.' We were bigger than all of that stuff so that was the approach we took for what we got. (Interview 8, September 29, 2015, p.5).

Gina also mentioned how they worked harder on the pitch to prove themselves: "We've got to play this much better, this much stronger, this much cleaner to show these guys. It's all basically to prove ourselves which I understand to a certain extent, but once you

start winning isn't that enough already?" (Interview 8, p.17). If proving themselves on the pitch did not work, they would spend time trying to convert those who didn't think women should play. Not only did the women try to earn the respect of those who did not give it by their play on the field, but off the field as well by contributing to the club, not just the women's program. When support was not given in the form of equipment, the women found ways to provide for themselves when others, specifically those who ran the club did not provide resources. Barb explained "We had to go after our own sponsorship, we had to go after things." (Interview 7, p.11). Furthermore, Gina stated "Once we started fundraising, getting more money, then we started getting our own jerseys. I think in a way you earned their respect and then I think they realized that these women are here to stay." (Interview 8, p.13).

Finally, the women defended the game against those who didn't think they should play due to rugby being a 'masculine' sport. Dee stated they would explain that women played for the same reasons the men did when the men questioned why women wanted to play rugby. When others voiced their concern that women's rugby would 'bastardize' the game, turn it into a 'sissy's' game, 'feminize' the game or make a 'mockery of the sport', the women responded by saying they played hard rugby and followed the same Laws as the men (Interview 1, June 4, 2014). Dee further explained that once the men saw how the women played, their negative opinion of women's rugby usually turned into a positive one (Interview 1).

This concludes the summary of my findings, using both an inductive and deductive analysis of the data. I will use the findings from my various analytic

approaches to relate to the literature and discuss future research in the following chapter, Conclusion and Discussion.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSSION AND DISCUSSION

In this chapter I will discuss how my findings relate to the literature reviewed in my second chapter. I will present my research questions and the findings from the interviews I conducted. I will then examine how my findings either support or contradict the literature, with reasoning. Finally, I will discuss recommendations for future studies based on the information obtained from the interviews I conducted, the data I analyzed and the relative lack of literature for the possible future research topics.

Discussion of Research Questions

The first research question I posed is: Why did the pioneer female rugby players in this study decide to play a sport that contradicts emphasized femininity and was previously only played by men?

In the literature there are many reasons discussed regarding why women want to play rugby including: wanting to try something new, challenging and different; for the novelty value; there is less emphasis on your physical appearance; the physical nature of the sport; their friends played; the joy of participating in a sport that requires physical strength and speed; a love for the sport; a sense of empowerment and self-confidence; playing in a team environment; an appreciation of the intellectual aspect of the game; a chance to travel and meet other people; and that male family members and friends played (Chu, Leberman, Howe & Bachlor, 2011; Shockley, 2005; Carle & Nauright, 1999). The pioneer players I interviewed mentioned almost every reason stated in the literature as to why they wanted to play rugby. The women stated they played rugby because: they wanted to try something new, challenging and different; the decreased emphasis on their

physical appearance; playing rugby went against gender norms; the physical nature of the sport; the joy of participating in a sport that requires physical strength and speed; an appreciation of the intellectual aspect of the game; a chance to travel and meet other people; male family members and friends played; inclusivity for all body types; the team environment; and a sense of empowerment and self-confidence. This last point of the women gaining a sense of empowerment and self-confidence was stated and discussed in-depth by all eight of my interviewees. The pioneer players explained how they gained empowerment and self-confidence through playing rugby, which had a major impact on the people they became.

The women interviewed did not mention that they played rugby for the *novelty of the game*, which differs from what was stated in the literature. I speculate that the strong culture of rugby in the province of Ontario prior to the women playing explains why the women interviewed did not find the idea of playing novel. All of the women interviewed stated that they saw rugby being played by boys at their high school or they had knowledge of rugby prior to playing which suggests why playing rugby was not a novel concept to those interviewed. The women also stated other reasons as to why they played rugby, which were not mentioned in the literature. The additional reasons why the pioneer players who participated in my research played rugby include: the camaraderie, the social aspect (culture) of the sport, the finesse needed to play, the Laws were the same for men and women, the competitive nature of the game, and it was fun. The camaraderie between those who play rugby and the social aspect, or the culture of the sport, were both reasons that were emphasized by all the women as to why they played and continued to play rugby. Furthermore, the women discussed the difficulties in trying to convey the culture

of the sport and its uniqueness to those who have not participated in rugby or have taken part in rugby culture.

It was discussed in the literature that unlike many other sports, rugby provided women with the opportunity to behave in ways that were not considered feminine through cultural standards (Collins, 2009). This was confirmed by some of the women I interviewed as it was stated that they were able to act in such a way that defies social norms by playing rugby. The women interviewed were drawn to play rugby, in part, as it provided an opportunity for women to defy social norms and was one of the few sports that allowed them to do so. Collins (2009) also explained that female rugby players experience rugby culture similarly to male players. This is in reference to rugby culture, specifically singing rugby songs and drinking. Again, the information from the literature is confirmed as the women interviewed discussed their participation and enjoyment of social events and taking part in rugby culture. Partying and drinking with teammates tended to occur after matches and was a form of celebration regardless of the outcome of the match.

It is also stated in the literature that many women who play rugby have often played some form of organized sport prior to getting involved in rugby (Shockley, 2005). My research confirms what Shockley (2005) explained as all the women I interviewed discussed their participation in other organized sports prior to becoming involved in rugby. These sports included: hockey, basketball, volleyball, soccer, flag football, badminton, netball, cross country, and track and field. Additionally, for many of my informants, their suitability for rugby was supported by their various boundary pushing behaviours in these previously played sports.

The second research question I proposed is: What type of support did the first female club rugby players in Ontario have from their family, friends and club members?

Researchers state that although some female players have been shown to have support from family, friends and the rugby community, support from these areas is not always given (Fallon & Jome, 2007; Carle & Nauright, 1999). The female rugby players interviewed confirmed the literature. Most of the women interviewed expressed that their parents and family members were supportive of them playing rugby. The women explained that family members who played rugby or took part in athletics themselves tended to be the more supportive of their venture into rugby. Others explained that initially their parents/family members did not understand why they wanted to play, but eventually were supportive of their participation. Two interviewees discussed how their parents were supportive; however, they were aware of some teammates' parents who were not. One of the players interviewed described how some women would not inform their families of their participation, while others received discouragement as the parents believed rugby to be too dangerous and masculine. In regard to the rugby community, again the data I collected confirms the literature. Some women interviewed described how their club members supported the women's team, while other pioneer players explained how gender equity was not present due to lack of support from club members. Furthermore, two women explained how they avoided this situation entirely by developing women's only clubs.

Furthermore, Carle and Nauright (1999) stated there were two initial reactions from parents, which included: fear of injury and stereotype that rugby is a man's game, which was held by fathers and family members who had played rugby. Dee (Interview 1,

June 4, 2014) and Helen (Interview 2, June 6, 2014) confirmed that some parents of female rugby players feared that they would be injured. Barb (Interview 7, April 24, 2015), Jane (Interview 6, March 31, 2015) and Gina (Interview 8, September 29, 2015) all stated that there were family members who were not fully supportive of them playing rugby which was a result from their parents believing that rugby was too masculine a sport. Jane (Interview 6) further elaborated on this point stating that a male family member was concerned that her physique would become too masculine from playing rugby, while Gina (Interview 8) explained how the religious beliefs of her family did not align with her playing rugby.

Support from the male club members seemed to be dependent on a variety of factors, which included: the success of the women's team, the amount in which the women's team benefited the club through additional members and income, the resources required by the women, and the days the women practiced. More support was given when women did not practice on the same nights as the men since they would not have to compete for equipment and field space. It was also easier for men to coach the women if they practiced on different nights as the coaches tended to be part of the club's men's team. Although the amount of support fluctuated depending on the club the women played for, a consistency noted by all pioneer players is in regard to the 'old boys' and their general lack of support. This area was not discussed in the literature, but was prevalent during the interviews. It was explained by the women that the 'old boys' tended to come from other countries that had a vast history of rugby and were very concerned for how the women would "bastardize" the traditions of the game. The women stated that they found support from one another when there was a lack of support given by family

members, friends, partners, male club members, female partners of male rugby players and other members of the public.

Carle and Nauright (1999) stated that public reactions to female rugby players in a study they conducted ranged from amusement, to interest regarding the format of the women's game, to disgust and general approval from a minority of the public. The women I interviewed confirmed what was found in the literature. The pioneer players explained that some people were supportive and impressed while others were concerned, shocked or disapproved of them playing. Family members who played rugby and friends and family who were athletic tended to be the most supportive of the women interviewed.

People in the pioneer players' lives outside of rugby, specifically coworkers, tended to be concerned for their safety and the possibility of domestic violence due to bruises and marks that were visible. Annemaree (Interview #5, March 28), Gina (Interview 8, September 29, 2015) and Katherine (Interview 3, July 1, 2014) discussed how they had to confront questions of domestic violence due to bruises and marks acquired from rugby. When this occurred the women I interviewed explained how they had to defend themselves and reiterate that they were not being physically abused by partners or family members. Others who displayed disgust or disapproval tended to be from men who did not participate in rugby and the female partners of the men who played at the club. Gina (Interview 8) discussed an encounter she had with a man at a bar who left their conversation once he found out that she played rugby. Suzanne (Interview 4) explained that resistance was often felt from the female partners of male players. Suzanne (Interview 4) elaborated that the disapproval from the female partners was most

likely seeded in concern and jealousy over the female players shared experience with their male partners.

The women interviewed unanimously stated that the majority of resistance and lack of support came from the 'old boys' at their clubs. The 'old boys' tended to show the most disapproval of women playing rugby, as it was a conflict to their rooted beliefs and traditions of the game. The reactions of club members who were older, valued the traditions of the game and often came from other countries, was not mentioned in the literature. I speculate that this finding may not have been included in the literature depending on where studies were conducted. As the majority of 'old boys' originated from other countries at the time women in Ontario began to participate in rugby, this distinct group may not have existed for other research.

In the literature, researchers explained how some women who play rugby have tried to create support from those who have not given it through the use of tactics. The tactics used by female rugby players include: proving the source wrong by trying to change their idea about women's rugby and presenting positive information regarding women's rugby (Fallon & Jome, 2007). The findings from my research confirm the literature. Barb (Interview 7, April 24, 2015) explained that she wanted those who did not support women's rugby to see them play. This helped to gain support from those that did not originally give it as they were able to see women playing rugby well and abiding by the Laws of the game. Barb (Interview 7), Dee (Interview 1, June 4, 2014) and Katherine (Interview 3, July 1, 2014) would also convey to those who did not support them why they enjoyed rugby: the contact and the camaraderie. Gina (Interview 8, September 29, 2015) explained how some women, including herself, tried to present positive

information, but if it wasn't accepted they just moved on rather than wasting their time trying to change someone's opinion that could not be changed.

Stigma associated with the sexuality of a female athlete can arise when playing a sport that is not considered gender appropriate. Literature has shown that there are multiple ways that an athlete may respond to stigma including: Confronting the stigma (Griffin, 1992) or apologist behaviours. Apologist behaviours include: defensive othering, identifying with the dominants propping up the dominants and normative identification (Ezzell, 2009; Gill, 2007; Krane, 2001). Barb (Interview 7, April 24, 2015), Gina (Interview 8, September 29, 2015), Suzanne (Interview 4, July 9, 2014) and Katherine (Interview 3, July 1, 2014) expressed how they confronted the stigmas associated with sexuality. As mentioned above, they wanted those who did not support women's rugby to see them play. Katherine (Interview 3) stated the pioneer female players strongly advocated for their rights.

In terms of apologist behaviours mentioned by the women, propping up the dominants and normative identification were discussed. Dee (Interview 1, June 4, 2014) discussed issues that their women's team encountered and the assistance obtained from the men at their club to rectify issues, such as the lack of privacy in the showers, rather than the women handling the matter. This aligns with propping up of the dominants. Suzanne (Interview 4) demonstrated normative identification when she explained the change in her appearance at the beginning of her rugby career. Suzanne explained how she subconsciously let her hair grow longer to look more feminine as a response to negative comments and the stigma associated with playing a traditionally masculine sport. This action aligns with normative identification. However, Helen (Interview 2,

June 6, 2014) expressed a tactic that was not discussed in the literature and is in opposition to normative identification. Rather than portraying emphasized femininity, Helen and others on her team acted more masculine as a method to shock others and show they were capable of playing rugby because they were demonstrating masculine characteristics believed to be needed to participate in rugby and rugby culture.

The women interviewed did not mention tactics related to defensive othering or identifying with the dominants. I speculate that the women interviewed did not use defensive othering or identifying with the dominants as a result of the unified women's rugby community. All the women interviewed discussed how women from different teams needed to work together to make women's rugby a success. The pioneer players explained how they would help each other, especially in terms of accommodation during travel and loaning of players, to ensure that the initiation and development of women's rugby was successful. If the women used the tactics of defensive othering or identifying with the dominants, it would counteract their efforts to develop women's rugby in the province by creating an atmosphere where the women worked against one another.

Other responses that were not discussed in the literature, but were mentioned during the interviews included: no response, ignoring the judgments of others, distancing themselves from those who did not agree with them playing rugby, trying to earn respect with their level of play on the pitch and defending the game. It was evident throughout the interviews that the women's main interest was to play rugby. As playing rugby was the pioneer player's main desire, these women stated that they would often ignore the judgments of others because they enjoyed playing rugby more than what others thought of them playing. When the women believed they could change the opinions of others,

they often would work harder on and off the pitch to prove themselves and earn the respect of those who did not initially approve of them playing. The women interviewed discussed their work ethic on the field to develop the necessary skills to play rugby well. However, another point of discussion was their work off the field in an attempt to be included as part of the club they joined. Barb (Interview 7) and Gina (Interview 8) discussed the women's contribution to not only the women's team, but to the club as a whole. Their contributions were often in the form of revenue generation through sponsorships obtained and bar revenue created through the addition of female members.

The third research question I presented is: What barriers and obstacles did these pioneer female rugby players face through their participation in a 'masculine' sport?

In the literature it is described that female athletes in a contact sport have faced many barriers, such as adverse family members and poor training conditions (Chandler & Nauright, 1999; Carle & Nauright, 1999). As the support of family members has been discussed in a former section of this chapter, I will focus on the training conditions as a barrier for participation.

The data I collected confirms the literature regarding poor training conditions as a barrier for women's participation in rugby. The literature did not state specific barriers regarding the types of poor training conditions so I have described the poor training conditions found from my research. The pioneer players stated they often did not receive high quality referees, received a lack of jerseys and equipment, were relegated to the in-goal areas of the pitch, did not receive access to women's only facilities and played in the last game of the day after all the men's teams had played. It was evident from each interview I conducted that facilities, specifically showers, were barriers for the women.

The lack of women's facilities meant the loss of their privacy when trying to shower. This resulted in the women trying to police the shower area themselves to keep men out, or to opt out of showering after a match. As a result, the women had to strongly advocate for their rights to their own facilities and in some cases fundraise part of the money needed to install women's facilities and showers.

Another issue discussed in relation to poor training conditions was access to high quality referees. Although some interviewees did have positive experiences with the referees they were appointed, others stated that access to high quality referees was not a common occurrence. The women explained that they often received referees who were at the end of their careers and were not very active during the game. The women explained that the higher level referees were utilized for the men's games.

Field space was another barrier that created gender inequity. Field bookings were challenging to obtain and when obtained, the women did not always have access to the full space. The women interviewed who were part of a men's club stated that they were often relegated to the in-goal areas of the pitch or moved off of the main field space. This affected their training as they had to modify drills to accommodate for the lack of space available to them. The women who were not part of a men's club stated that it was challenging at times to find their own field space and they had to use connections within their team to do so.

Available funding was mentioned as an issue for the women interviewed. The pioneer players interviewed stated that the women had to do their own fundraising and work as a collective unit to obtain items needed, such as equipment and jerseys. The women often received already used jerseys and equipment, which at times hindered their

trainings and competitions. Furthermore, the money fundraised by the women did not always get allocated to the women's team. A couple of the women interviewed mentioned that money their team fundraised was allocated to the men's team instead of their own.

The final barrier discussed by the women interviewed was the amount of travel necessary to play other women's teams. I believe this barrier was impacted by the time in which these women were playing, the development of the women's game, and the geography of the province. As the women's game was being established during the 1970s-1990s, women had to travel long distances to play another team as there were few teams established. I also believe that the size of the province and distance between major cities impacted the amount of travel required for the pioneer women who played in Ontario. It was the women's love for the game and opportunity to play a contact sport that allowed them to persevere through these barriers and continue to play.

The fourth and final research question I posed is: What were the experiences of the women who participated on the first sanctioned women's club rugby teams in Ontario?

There is a lack of literature regarding women's experiences playing rugby. As such, the focus of this section will be the data I collected and analyzed in relation to the experiences of the women I interviewed.

All the women interviewed stated that they had positive experiences playing rugby and it shaped the people they became. Although there were many positives, the pioneer players did discuss two main challenges associated with being a woman and playing rugby. As discussed earlier in this chapter, the main challenged encountered by

the women interviewed was gender inequity, which had a major impact on the pioneer players' experiences. However, a secondary challenge was also present, which was the questioning of their sexuality by others. The women discussed how they encountered sexist comments and actions regarding their participation in rugby.

The literature states that the sexuality of female athletes has come into question since women have started participating in sport. The women interviewed did not let sexist comments and actions made by others impact or affect their experience of playing rugby. The pioneer players stated that they either dismissed the comments or ignored them completely. I believe these actions are why the women did not readily mention challenges or issues regarding ridicule based on their presumed sexuality during the interviews. The impact of their presumed sexuality by others was only discussed when initiated by me as the interviewer. The experience of playing rugby seemed to outweigh any negative comments or actions regarding their sexuality.

All the women interviewed stated that they had a positive and fun experience while playing during the formative years of women's rugby. The physicality and the team camaraderie were the most noted aspects of the game which lead to the enjoyment and continuation of play for the women who participated in my research. Not only did all the women state that they enjoyed playing rugby, all participants also explained how rugby had a profound impact on their lives and who they became as individuals. This was not discussed in the literature; however, I found that rugby gave the pioneer players more self confidence, it provided them with life lessons and skills, they became much more assertive, believed in themselves and were not afraid of being victimized. I believe that

this information was not in the literature because the experience of female rugby players has not been thoroughly researched.

Recommendations for Future Studies

There are gaps in the literature regarding women's participation in rugby, especially during the formative years of the sport being available to female participants. From the study I conducted, I would suggest that further research be completed on women's involvement in rugby administration and policy. It was mentioned in one of the interviews I conducted that the participant had a very positive experience playing. However, when she became involved on a board of directors her experience changed drastically. I believe it would be both interesting and beneficial to research women's involvement on executive boards as it may yield different results from the ones found in my study.

Another recommendation is to have more embedded ethnographer research. I believe spending a season with a team and collecting data throughout the entirety of the season would give insight into how women's rugby has developed and the challenges faced by current players. This method of data collection would allow the researcher to obtain in-depth knowledge of the participants and the dynamics between the players, coaches, management staff, club members and the public. One of the comments made throughout the interviews I conducted for this study was that the women could not always recall details of their experiences or the negatives aspects that occurred during their participation. Becoming an embedded ethnographer would allow the researcher to obtain information regarding players' experiences at the time in which the experience is occurring.

Finally, I would suggest a methodological exploration of the benefits and challenges of an insider doing research. As a person who is currently embedded in rugby culture, and has been for over 12 years, I believe studying the impacts of the researcher being an insider would be informative and provide insight into the data collected. Throughout the research process I have noticed that the participants spoke more candidly with me as well as shared some insights that I don't believe they would have if I had not been involved with rugby and was not a female rugby player. As a challenge, I noticed the women would not always explain themselves thoroughly as they assumed I knew what they were discussing and did not feel the need to elaborate. From this, I believe I may have missed the opportunity to obtain more detailed accounts of their experiences. As such, it would be beneficial to conduct research to further explain the benefits and challenges of being an insider doing research.

Summary

Exploring the challenges female pioneer rugby players had in Ontario playing a traditionally masculine sport, examining the type of support the women interviewed had in regard to their participation rugby, researching the barriers these female players faced in relation to their gender and sexuality through their engagement in rugby, and exploring the experiences of the female pioneer club players who played in Ontario, led to some insightful findings. Prior to conducting interviews, I believed that the main challenge these women would have endured would be related to the questioning of their sexuality and the ridicule encountered as a result. However, it became evident that the questioning of their sexuality from others was a secondary challenge and one that was not given much thought by the participants. It was clear that gender inequity was the main issue

encountered by the those who participated in women's rugby during its formative years. The women explained how they persevered through the gender inequity they endured and methods used to counteract the inequality whenever possible. It would be beneficial to continue this research using a larger participant base to include the experiences of women who were pioneer players in other provinces. Through the actions of the women interviewed, it is evident that their hard work, dedication and passion to play rugby has made for a more accepting environment for girls and women who follow in their footsteps.

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Appendix A: Ethics



Brock University
 Research Ethics Office
 Tel: 905-688-5550 ext. 3035
 Email: reb@brocku.ca

Social Science Research Ethics Board

Certificate of Ethics Clearance for Human Participant Research

DATE: 3/25/2014

PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR: VAN INGEN, Cathy
Kinesiology

FILE: 13-212 - VAN INGEN

TYPE: Masters Thesis/Project STUDENT: Nicole Kovacs
SUPERVISOR: Cathy van Ingen

TITLE: Rucking into New Territory: A Case-Study on the Experiences of the First Sanctioned Female Club Rugby Players in Ontario.

ETHICS CLEARANCE GRANTED

Type of Clearance: NEW

Expiry Date: 3/31/2015

The Brock University Social Sciences Research Ethics Board has reviewed the above named research proposal and considers the procedures, as described by the applicant, to conform to the University's ethical standards and the Tri-Council Policy Statement. Clearance granted from 3/25/2014 to 3/31/2015.

The Tri-Council Policy Statement requires that ongoing research be monitored by, at a minimum, an annual report. Should your project extend beyond the expiry date, you are required to submit a Renewal form before 3/31/2015. Continued clearance is contingent on timely submission of reports.

To comply with the Tri-Council Policy Statement, you must also submit a final report upon completion of your project. All report forms can be found on the Research Ethics web page at <http://www.brocku.ca/research/policies-and-forms/research-forms>.

In addition, throughout your research, you must report promptly to the REB:

- a) Changes increasing the risk to the participant(s) and/or affecting significantly the conduct of the study;
- b) All adverse and/or unanticipated experiences or events that may have real or potential unfavourable implications for participants;
- c) New information that may adversely affect the safety of the participants or the conduct of the study;
- d) Any changes in your source of funding or new funding to a previously unfunded project.

We wish you success with your research.

Approved:


 Jan Frijters, Chair
 Social Sciences Research Ethics Board

Note: Brock University is accountable for the research carried out in its own jurisdiction or under its auspices and may refuse certain research even though the REB has found it ethically acceptable.

If research participants are in the care of a health facility, at a school, or other institution or community organization, it is the responsibility of the Principal Investigator to ensure that the ethical guidelines and clearance of those facilities or institutions are obtained and filed with the REB prior to the initiation of research at that site.

Informed Consent

Project Title: Rucking into New Territory: A Case-Study on the Experiences of the First Sanctioned Female Club Rugby Players in Ontario

Principal Student Investigator:
Nicole Kovacs,
Graduate Student
Faculty of Applied Health Sciences
Brock University
nk07sp@brocku.ca
(905) 380-6058

Faculty Supervisor:
Dr. Cathy van Ingen,
Associate Professor
Department of Kinesiology
Brock University
cvaningen@brocku.ca
(905) 688-5550 Ext. 4981

INVITATION

You are invited to participate in a study that involves research. The purpose of this study is to explore the experiences of individuals who played on the first sanctioned women's club rugby teams in Ontario.

WHAT'S INVOLVED

As a participant, you will be asked to agree to participate in this study by signing an informed consent form and participate in an interview with the researcher. Interviews will be audio recorded and will take approximately 1-1.5 hours of your time. The interview will take place face-to-face, via Skype or on the telephone, which will be chosen by your preference. In the event of a face-to-face interview, the interview will take place in a location that will allow for privacy and confidentiality. The Brock University Library or other locations that you are comfortable having the interview take place that will allow for privacy and confidentiality will be used for face-to-face interviews.

You will also receive a copy of the interview transcript via e-mail to review its accuracy and add comments if you feel clarification is needed. Please highlight any comments added to the interview transcript. It is asked that you return the transcript via e-mail to the researcher within one week of receiving it to confirm the accuracy of the transcript or include comments for clarification.

During the interview, you will be asked questions regarding your experience while playing on the first sanctioned women's rugby team at your club. General questions will include how you became involved in rugby, any obstacles that may have been present during your participation and other questions related to your experience while playing on the first sanctioned women's rugby team at your club.

POTENTIAL BENEFITS AND RISKS

Possible benefits of participation include the opportunity to reflect on past experiences and share insights regarding your participation on the first sanctioned women's rugby team at your club. There are no known or anticipated risks associated with participation in this study.

CONFIDENTIALITY

The identity of the participants and access to the data collected will be known only to Nicole Kovacs (Principal Student Investigator) and Dr. Cathy van Ingen (Faculty Supervisor). Your name will not appear in the study. Pseudonyms will be used in place of your name; however, with your permission, anonymous quotations may be used. Shortly after the interview has been completed, the researcher will send you a copy of the transcript to give you an opportunity to confirm the accuracy of our conversation and to add or clarify any points that you wish.

Data collected during this study will be stored on the researcher's password protect personal laptop and in a locked cabinet in the researcher's home. Data will be retained indefinitely to be used for future publications by the researcher. If you **do not** give consent for your interview transcripts to be kept indefinitely, please check the box below. If consent is not given for your transcript to be retained by the researcher for future use for publications, your transcript will be deleted and shredded immediately after the completion of the study.

☐ Check if consent is **not** given for the researcher to retain your transcript.

VOLUNTARY PARTICIPATION

Participation in this study is voluntary. If you wish, you may decline to answer any questions or participate in any component of the study. Further, you may decide to withdraw from this study at any time and may do so without any penalty.

PUBLICATION OF RESULTS

Results of this study may be published in professional journals and presented at conferences. Feedback about this study will be available from Nicole Kovacs via e-mail once the study has been completed.

CONTACT INFORMATION AND ETHICS CLEARANCE

If you have any questions about this study or require further information, please contact the Principal Student Investigator or the Faculty Supervisor using the contact information provided above. This study has been reviewed and received ethics clearance through the Research Ethics Board at Brock University (file # 13-212). If you have any comments or concerns about your rights as a research participant, please contact the Research Ethics Office at (905) 688-5550 Ext. 3035, reb@brocku.ca.

Thank you for your assistance in this project. Please keep a copy of this form for your records.

CONSENT FORM

I agree to participate in this study described above. I have made this decision based on the information I have read in the Information-Consent Letter. I have had the opportunity to receive any additional details I wanted about the study and understand that I may ask questions in the future. I understand that I may withdraw this consent at any time.

Name: _____

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Appendix B: Recruitment

Recruitment E-mail to Ontario Rugby Club Presidents

My name is Nicole Kovacs and I am a Graduate Student in the Faculty of Applied Health Sciences at Brock University in St. Catharines, Ontario. I am conducting research for my Masters thesis entitled *Rucking into New Territory: A Case-Study on the Experiences of the First Sanctioned Female Club Rugby Players in Ontario*.

The intent of this e-mail is to inquire if you have any information regarding the first sanctioned women's rugby team for your club including the women who were on the first sanctioned team and any club documents. These documents may include the official record of when the first sanctioned female rugby team came into fruition, as well as any documents on the voting of this topic.

The purpose of this research project is to explore the experiences of the individuals who played on the first women's club rugby teams in Ontario. If you are aware of any individuals who were on the first women's rugby team at your club, it would be greatly appreciated if you could pass along this e-mail to them, which includes my contact information. If there are any women who would like to be part of my study, they can contact me via e-mail (see below).

The expected duration of participation for any women interested in this study is a one-on-one interview conducted by Nicole Kovacs that will require approximately 1-1.5 hours to complete. Interviews will take place face-to-face, via Skype or on the telephone, which will be chosen by the preference of the participant and will be audio recorded.

If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me.

Thank you,

Nicole Kovacs,
Graduate Student
Department of Health and Physical Education
Brock University
nk07sp@brocku.ca

Dr. Cathy van Ingen,
Associate Professor
Department of Kinesiology
Brock University
cvaningen@brocku.ca

This study has been reviewed and received ethics clearance through Brock University's Research Ethics Board (file #13-212).

Letter of Invitation

Title of Study: Rucking into New Territory: A Case-Study on the Experiences of the First Sanctioned Female Club Rugby Players in Ontario

Principal Student Investigator: Nicole Kovacs, Graduate Student, Department of Health and Physical Education, Brock University

Faculty Supervisor: Dr. Cathy van Ingen, Associate Professor, Department of Kinesiology, Brock University

I, Nicole Kovacs, Graduate Student, from the Faculty of Applied Health Sciences, Brock University, invite you to participate in a research project entitled *Rucking into New Territory: A Case-Study on the Experiences of the First Sanctioned Female Club Rugby Players in Ontario*.

The purpose of this research project is to explore the experiences of the individuals who played on the first women's club rugby teams in Ontario. Should you choose to participate, you will be asked to participate in a one-on-one interview conducted by Nicole Kovacs that will require approximately 1-1.5 hours to complete. Interviews will take place face-to-face, via Skype or on the telephone, which will be chosen by your preference and will be audio recorded.

Participation is voluntary, and as such, you reserve the right to decline in answering any questions. If you choose to terminate your participation in the interview at any time please know there will be no negative consequences.

To ensure the confidentiality of the participant, your name will not appear in the final written report. Pseudonyms will be used in place of your name at all times. To further protect your identity, the interview transcripts will not contain identifying information and will be kept in a locked cabinet in the home of the researcher and on the researcher's personal laptop which is password protected.

This research should benefit you as a participant as it may allow you to understand how your involvement in rugby impacted the sport and created opportunities for other girls and women to play. For the academic community, this study will expand on the knowledge regarding women in sport and the experiences of individuals who played a sport that was not considered gender appropriate.

If you have any pertinent questions about your rights as a research participant, please contact the Brock University Research Ethics Officer (905 688-5550 ext 3035, reb@brocku.ca).

If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me (see below for contact information).

Thank you,

Nicole Kovacs,
Graduate Student
Faculty of Applied Health Sciences
Brock University
nk07sp@brocku.ca
(905) 380-6058

Dr. Cathy van Ingen,
Associate Professor
Department of Kinesiology
Brock University
cvaningen@brocku.ca
(905) 688-5550 Ext. 4981

This study has been reviewed and received ethics clearance through Brock University's Research Ethics Board (file # 13-212).

Appendix C: Interview Guide

The purpose of this interview is to explore your experience playing on the first sanctioned women's rugby team at your club. This interview is designed to understand your interest to play rugby, the support you had to play and any obstacles you may have encountered while playing rugby on the first sanctioned women's team at your club.

- 1) When did you first hear about rugby?
 - a) Why did you decide to play rugby?
 - b) What was your interest in rugby that led you to play the sport?
 - c) What age did you start playing rugby?
 - d) What club did you play for?
- 2) Can you tell me about how you became involved in club rugby?
- 3) Tell me about your experience playing on the first sanctioned women's rugby team at your club?
- 4) What support did you have in regard to playing rugby?
 - a) What support did you have from your:
 - i) Family
 - ii) Friends...to play rugby?
 - b) What support did your women's team have from your club?

- i) The executive committee
 - ii) The men's team(s)
- 5) What obstacles did you endure while playing on the first sanctioned women's team at your club?
- a) From whom did you find gave the most resistance to a women's rugby team?
 - b) Was it difficult as a female to play what is considered a 'masculine' sport for the first time at your club?
- 6) Did you play on other women's teams?
- a) Tell me about that (or those) experience(s)?
 - i) How did that (or those) experience(s) vary from playing on your club's first sanctioned women's rugby team?
- 7) What did you enjoy most about playing on the first sanctioned women's rugby team at your club?
- 8) What was your opinion of rugby prior to playing and how did it change, if at all, when you began to play?
- 9) Did playing rugby change or alter the way you felt about yourself?
- 10) Is there anything that I may not have asked, that you would like to mention?

Appendix D: Transcript Coding

Experiences

Why Play?

Support

Obstacles

1

Interview #3 – K

2

3

N – Today is July 1, 2014. I will be interviewing Katherine Hesson-Bolton.

4

5

Talking starts at 0:00:30.0

6

7

K – Hi, may I help you?

8

N – Hi, is this Katherine?

9

K – Yes it is.

10

N – Hi, it's Nicole calling. How are you?

11

K – Hi Nicole, how are you doing?

12

N – Good, thank you.

13

K – Good, good!

14

N – I hope you're, ah, enjoying Canada Day.

15

K – Um, I've actually been working on rugby stuff today.

16

N - *laughs*

17

K - *laughs* Our Hamilton Club has its 60th anniversary coming up.

18

N – Oh!

19

K – So myself and one of the other executive members we were here and we were working on our banquet program and yeah. So, we did have a beverage and a snack. So you know, Happy Canada Day.

22

N - *laughs* Hey, a day full of rugby isn't a bad one *laughs*.

23

K – Yeah, exactly. Sometimes, you know, when you're limited in your time you just got to get things done.

24

N – Yep.

25

K – Yeah.

26

N – Oh, that's a bit of a bummer, but also that's awesome that your club's ah, 60th anniversary. That's great.

28

K – Yeah! Yeah. No, it's very good, very good. So, yeah, anyways. So we have finally connected after some time.

30

N – Yes!

31

K – And, ah, we can go from there.

32

N – Perfect. So, um, I'm just going to, first just go over, I know you've signed and read over the informed consent, but just a couple things very quickly. Um, I will be recording this, um and after I've recorded this, um, I will transcribe it and the recorded version will be deleted and I will use the transcript for my research.

36

K – Right, yes.

37

N – Um, if at any time during the interview you don't want to answer a question or if you want to stop, just let me know and that-that's fine as well.

39

K – Okay.

40

N – Um, and I will be using pseudonyms to replace names just, you know, to-to keep things confidential.

42

K – Yep

43

N – Um, and yes ah, once I finish my transcription I'll send you a copy of it and then um, I may have additional questions or um, just for you to look over and make sure you're good with everything or if you've remembered something you want to add then you can do that then.

46

- 47 K – Right, okay.
 48 N – Perfect. So I'm just going to start off really quickly just telling you kind of where I'm, how
 49 I've been involved in rugby um and kind of what has led to my research.
 50 K – Uh huh, okay.
 51 N – So, um, I started playing, I started playing rugby ah, twelve years ago now. My dad started
 52 the first high school girls' team in Ontario and so when I was younger he had me throwing a ball
 53 at a tree for accuracy and I just been ah, involved in the sport and ah, grew to really, really love
 54 it. Um, I play for the Niagara Wasps. I played for the club there and then I played for Brock as
 55 well.
 56 K – Okay, great, okay.
 57 N – And ah, yeah, an-and it wasn't until I kind of played for Brock that I started realizing some
 58 obstacles. When I was talking to people and you know, I would be having a conversation with
 59 them and inevitably rugby would come up um, when it's a passion it just kind of does, and some
 60 people that I was talking to, their kind of demeanor and things would change. Like they would
 61 start questioning me like 'Oh, you play rugby? Well, why do you play that game? Isn't it a game
 62 for guys? And aren't you...'
 63 K – Right, right.
 64 N – And all of that stuff. So I started wondering, you know, if I'm still going, you know, if
 65 women that are playing are still going through this kind of stuff, what did the women who were
 66 on their first club teams have to deal with, with trying to develop a team, you know? And-and
 67 what was their experience like, so...
 68 K – Right.
 69 N – So that's where my research kind of stemmed from and I was just interested. It came out of
 70 pure interest of hearing, you know, ah like, your like, like women like you and women who
 71 started playing this game where there was no one else that came really before them at their club
 72 or things like that to mentor them and so that's where my interest lay and-and I just wanted to
 73 talk to women and find out their story.
 74 K – Cool, yeah.
 75 N – So...
 76 K – Good.
 77 N – Umm, when did you first hear about rugby?
 78 K – I actually heard about rugby when I moved to Ottawa in 1985. Um, I was new to Ottawa and
 79 one of my coworkers, her boyfriend played for the Ottawa Indians and he was going to start
 80 coaching the women's team that summer. So she initially invited me out more from a social
 81 aspect. You know, you're new to the city, come to rugby, meet people, social aspect and I met
 82 him and he was going to start coaching the women's team and that's where he said 'Oh, are you
 83 into sports at all? Is this something you would be interested in because we're going to start
 84 practices in a couple of weeks?' And he said 'What's your sport?' And at that time my
 85 competitive sport was badminton. And he just about wet his pants. *both laugh* So I was
 86 playing, I had just finished college, I had moved from Winnipeg to Ottawa, but um, I played
 87 badminton, but before that I played like basketball, volleyball, I did some flag football, so I'm
 88 like yeah. And I did know about rugby because when I was in high school in Dartmouth, Nova
 89 Scotia, we had a boys rugby team. Um, but I only knew about it for boys, for guys.
 90 N – Yeah.

my
background

91 K - I, you know, had no concept of women playing. Um, so yeah, that's how I got involved. I
 92 went out to a practice at the high school one day and I met some other women and I couldn't
 93 catch the ball.

94 N - Yep.

95 K - And I grew up, I grew up with a dad where we watched football together and loved it.

96 N - Yeah.

97 K - And actually his team was the Hamilton Tiger Cats.

98 N - Yep. *laughs*

99 K - And, um, it was all about throwing the ball forwards and I'm like 'I'm throwing the ball
 100 backwards.' So it was very different and I thought it was fun. And I just kept going back.

101 N - So, I know you're, you just mentioned it was fun and that social aspect. Um, so is that why
 102 you decided to play?

103 K - Um, I think for me part of it was that it was a challenge physically...

104 N - Mhmm.

105 K - ...which I enjoyed. Um, the fact that I felt, you know, that there were some skill sets that I
 106 you know, kicking the ball a different way was a challenge. Um, the fact that I was new to a city,
 107 it was a great way to meet people.

108 N - Mhmm.

109 K - Um, but it was just a great physical outlet.

110 N - Mhmm. Definitely.

111 K - That you know, I hadn't experienced in other sports.

112 N - So, what age did you start playing then?

113 K - I would have been, what I was about what, 24. I started later.

114 N - Mhmm. And was it...

115 K - Yeah...

116 N - And was it, was it the Ottawa Indians that you started playing for then?

117 K - No, no actually it was the Ottawa Banshees.

118 N - Okay.

119 K - And it was the, it was the woman's club. They were not affiliated with the men's club.

120 N - Oh really?

121 K - Yes. Which in it, which in itself was a little different.

122 N - Yeah.

123 K - Um, so the Ottawa Banshees, we um, we were an independent women's club. Um, a lot of
 124 the rugby clubs in Ottawa at the time used to practice and play and were affiliated with the Twin
 125 Elm Rugby Park.

126 N - Mhmm.

127 K - And we did not do that. Um, we probably didn't have the money to do it, nor were we
 128 invited to do it. Um, so we would like get practice time at local high school fields or different
 129 um, recreational fields. And some of our games were actually held at different fields. They...
 130 later years our games were held at Twin Elms, but the initial, the early years...

131 N - Yeah.

132 K - ...um, our games would be at different, um, fields in our community.

133 N - So, what year did that, ah, the Ottawa Banshees start?

134 K - They would have actually, I'd have to go back and look at it...

135 N - Mhmm.

136 K - ...when they started, [but they were going a few years before I joined.]

Father watched
Sports

stressed this - contact sport for women
- having a physical outlet

started at 24 - ~1985

Lack of
facility

137 N – Okay.

138 K – Um, so yeah. So they have a website.

139

140 *Looked up website – link is <http://www.ottawabeavers.com/about/banshees-history/> states that
141 Ottawa Banshees was founded in 1979*

142

143 N – Yep.

144 K – Um, and there is another person, Sue Chalk was um, a player or captain.

145 N – I'll be talking to her. I've been in contact with her actually.

146 K – Okay, so she would have a lot of the initial history about the Banshees.

147 N – Okay.

148 K – Um, yeah.

149 N – Awesome. So, ^{PKRA} do you know why then it kind of did... there was a decision made to be like a
150 completely female club? Like it was, you guys were independent.

151 K – Well, let's think about the early 80s *laughs* It was just um, as an example, when we would
152 go to Twin Elm's and we would have a rugby game at Twin Elm's, um, we often would have to
153 kind of take over a change room. *showers / change room

154 N – Mhmm.

155 K – And when we wanted to shower we would have women at either end of the hallway pretty
156 much aggressively keeping the guys away. And there were no doors on the shower rooms so
157 there were doors taken off of another room and we would take that and put that out so the
158 women could have privacy. And we pretty much had to um, just say 'Screw you. We're going to
159 have a shower. We paid our money to be here and play and we want our privacy and we want a
160 change room.' So it was very um, you really had to advocate strongly for your rights, for field
161 time, for quality reffing, for you know, getting a change room.

Great
example
about
showers

162 N – Yeah.

163 K – Umm, yeah so being an independent women's club, we could raise our own funds, we could
164 direct... we had our own board, we did our own thing. Um, and we just weren't having to deal
165 with the political bullshit of rugby in Ontario with men's. - Why a strictly women's team

166 N – Mhmm.

↳ Lack of teams

167 K – And we travelled a lot. We did a lot of great things as a women's club.

168 N – So was that the first club team you played for?

169 K – Yes, yeah.

170 N – Um, and so you went out... can you just tell me kind of tha-that, your experience with the
171 Ottawa Banshees, like just me you experience with playing.

172 K – It was a lot, well first of all it was a group of women coming together to play a sport.

173 N – Mhmm.

174 K – Um, and we travelled a lot. We would go to the US quite a bit. Like there would be a
175 tournament on and someone would put a phone call out on a Friday and go 'There's a
176 tournament in Vermont.' And we'd all scramble after work and go get our stuff together and then
177 we'd drive down to Vermont. Um, we would go down for a couple of years we went down to
178 Saranac, New York, which is a huge rugby tournament...

179 N – Yep.

180 K – ...that's been going on over 20 some years if not more now and we would go down and play
181 there. Um, the Ottawa Banshees, they were asked by the City of Ottawa to represent Ottawa with
182 Den Hague sports exchange.

Issues
going
forward
w/ sexuality
& race

- 183 N – Mhmm.
- 184 K – So we were the official women's rugby club with other sports groups to go to Den Hague in
 185 Holland. Um, what else did we do? We went to the sports exchange. Um, so because we just, we
 186 worked collectively together, we would do our own fundraising um, we um, if someone was in
 187 need, if someone needed a job or housing, again that rugby culture was there. *} Given opportunities*
- 188 N – Yep. *↳ Helping each other out*
- 189 K – And you just helped women out. But we also were involved with the men on our terms. So I
 190 know like years later, um, the um, I think it was the Ottawa Scottish **says in an unsure tone**, it *↳ Example*
 191 was one of the men's teams were hosting the Oxford men, um, and so some of the women were
 192 billeting rugby players, you know, who were from the Oxford team.
- 193 N – Mhmm.
- 194 K – So we weren't opposed to, you know, working with the men and helping them out. But we
 195 did like that autonomy.
- 196 N – Yeah.
- 197 K – Yep, we um, we did our own, you know, we would do visualization courses, we did fitness
 198 courses, we did things in the off season like either indoor soccer or um, broomball so that we had
 199 a sport to keep up our fitness over the winter. Um, a fundraising event we did a couple of winters
 200 where the city run ice rinks needed people to monitor the rink and clean them up and flood them.
 201 We did that for a couple years to raise money for our team. Um, so you know, some people
 202 didn't agree with women playing rugby and in the early years were pretty vocal about it. Um,
 203 there were times where we would travel to The States or you might go some place where you just
 204 knew you didn't separate off. You stayed together as a, as a large group of women... *} Safety at rink for playing*
- 205 N – Yeah.
- 206 K – ...for safety. That was pretty clear. Um...
- 207 N – So who did you have kind of obstacles with? Like, was it ah, like club, other clubs or was it
 208 just people you kind of encountered? What obstacles did you face?
- 209 K – I think it was both. It was both. I think some of the men's clubs certainly didn't want to have
 210 a women's side with them at all. They didn't want to be associated with women's sides.
- 211 N – Okay.
- 212 K – Um, sometimes it was the rugby administration where you might not be getting the best
 213 referees. It might not be that you'd be getting um, fields, you know field bookings or if
 214 something had to be rescheduled or if it was going to be changed, it was always going to be the
 215 women, not men.) *Lack of referees & fields*
- 216 N – Yep, yep.
- 217 K – Um, I really do think the biggest impact that happened for the women and where the men
 218 started changing was when the recreation department started granting money to sports
 219 development. And then the men started realizing through Trillium Funding and other grant
 220 money that if they had a girl or a women's side, this was a positive thing. *Wanted women's teams for funding*
- 221 **both laugh**
- 222 N – It's...
- 223 K – And that's when we saw the changes when, you know, the men's sides were starting to
 224 develop women's clubs because they realized there was funding available with it.
- 225 N – So not so much because they decided 'Oh, it would be nice to have a women's side.' But
 226 because of...
- 227 K – No.
- 228 N – ...funding that they would get. Yep.

- 229 K – Exactly. And at that time they'd applied to the city or for some other grants and they realized
 230 this is a good thing to do because of the funding, not so much because they thought it was the
 231 way to go. *funding*
- 232 N – So did you find...
- 233 K – And not, yeah, sorry go ahead.
- 234 N – Oh I was just going to ask, did you find it was vocal kind of, people *vocalizing* their kind of
 235 um, not loving having a women's side or not loving having women playing or was it more... cuz
 236 I know you were talking about you know, venues would get changed, or you wouldn't get the
 237 greatest refs, was it something that you saw more through actions?
- 238 K – I-I-I think it was both. Sometimes you would have rugby people who were very voca-vocal
 239 that women shouldn't be playing rugby. Um, and they were pretty clear about that and that their
 240 club didn't want to have women around. Um, other times it was through just behaviours and
 241 actions.
- 242 N – Mhmm.
- 243 K – Yeah.
- 244 N – What kind of, um, things would people say about women and playing rugby that ah, when
 245 they were against it? Did you hear something quite frequently um...
- 246 K – Um, I wouldn't say it was frequent, but I mean I think you know, you would have
 247 derogatory remarks. Um, that you know, that women shouldn't play rugby. It's dangerous. This
 248 is not the kind of thing I'd want my sister, my daughter to play. Um, you know, just depending
 249 on where you might be, um, sometimes remarks were certainly a lot more derogatory.
- 250 N – Yeah.
- 251 K – Um, I remember one time we went to Mad River, Vermont **laughs** and they weren't really
 252 keen on having rugby players in their town, much less... *Issues playing abroad*
- 253 N – Wow.
- 254 K – ...it was one time where I felt that our physical safety, we did *not* go anywhere unless we
 255 were in a solid group.
- 256 N – Wow.
- 257 K – I really felt like yes, these are, we're not getting a welcome wagon here. Yeah.
- 258 N – That's, that's a bit ah, scary to-to think about that. That just because you play a sport that,
 259 you know, to make sure that you're traveling with a-a good group and safety coming into
 260 question.
- 261 K – Yep.
- 262 N – That's scary.
- 263 K – Yep, it was a couple of times. You also have to remember too back in the 80s, um, 1) that
 264 I'm black, we had Asian women on our team so from a Canadian perspective, especially going
 265 into the US, some of those race issues weren't at the top of our minds. *Race issues abroad*
- 266 N – Mhmm.
- 267 K – Um, I remember one time when we were playing at Saranac, I was the captain of the team
 268 and ah, you know, I rolled over in a ruck and the referee called me for rolling over and he said,
 269 what he said was his call was 'Hey Brownie, penalty to Brownie.' And we were playing another
 270 Canadian team and all the women got really upset. And I was like 'You can address me as
 271 number 3 or captain.' *Example*
- 272 N – Yeah.
- 273 K – And **laughs** you know, so like you would just never expect that to happen.
- 274 N – No.

275 K – Um, playing back in Ontario or we also for a while there we used to play in the um, Eastern
 276 Quebec League. So a lot of our games were like on the Montreal side because we were in
 277 Ottawa.

278 N – Mhmm.

279 K – Um, yeah, so I mean those we those issues as well but that whole other aspect you wouldn't
 280 think of.

281 N – Yeah, definitely not.

282 K – Yeah.

283 N – And do you think there was like a-a cultural element to that, like when you said you were
 284 playing in the 80s, um, that made a difference with how, um, kind of rugby was being perceived?
 285 [Was there any link between culture, like the time that you were, you were starting to play and
 286 then the development of the women's game?]

287 K – I-I do think that with some of the funding and the move to just have a focus on women and
 288 girls in-in recreation generally and having that funding come about. I, you know, I think that was
 289 something that I kind of really remember as this time where there's a change here happening in
 290 the sport.

291 N – Yep.

292 K – Um, yeah.

293 N – So I know we talked a lit- about you know, the obstacles and kind of things that you've
 294 encountered that you've had to deal with, but what support did you have, um, to play rugby?
 295 Like from family, well we'll break it down, um, but what support did you have to play.

296 K – Um, I think a lot of the support just came from the other women.

297 N – Mhmm.

298 K – From the team members themselves. Um, you know, sometimes you'd have, sometimes
 299 you'd have coaches um, *pauses* like I remember when we first, when I first started playing and
 300 you know, we had two male coaches and I think part of them thought it was a bit of a dating
 301 pool.

302 N – Yeah.

303 K – Um, so there was a little bit of that kind of mentality coming in with the coaching, but they
 304 realized these women really want to play rugby. Some of them did date women on the team but
 305 they realized that the majority of the women really wanted to play the sport and they were there
 306 about the athleticism of it.

307 N – Mhmm.

308 K – Um, we would get support from coaches. Um, family? Yes, you know, I, my parents lived in
 309 a different province, they saw me play once, they saw me practice a couple of times. Um, my,
 310 I'm still involved in rugby. I'm still playing even going into my early 50s my mom says 'Oh
 311 hunny, you're getting a little older now, it's pretty rough. It's time to stop.'

312 *both laugh*

313 N – Hey, if you can still play it, keep going! *laughs*

314 K – *laughs* Exactly, exactly! Um, and you would, you certainly would get, and I, you know,
 315 and I don't want to paint all of the men the same way, there were certainly men out there who
 316 were very positive. They were either starting to coach in high schools or their daughters were
 317 starting to play and there were some really good referees who would definitely ref the women's
 318 games and were supportive of women playing rugby.

319 N – Mhmm.

Cultural
Element
Add?

(*)

Combated
lack of
support

↳ 'rough sport'

Had
supportive
coaches +
some good
refs

- 320 K – Um, and you knew who those people were just by the way they you know, interacted with
 321 you during the game, after the game, um, yeah.
- 322 N – So were your, were your family kind of hesitant, you know your mom was, you were talking
 323 about your mom saying ‘Oh, do you think you can still do it?’ and that kind of thing. Were they
 324 hesitant at all, was there some kind of um...
- 325 K – Umm...
- 326 N – Or were they...
- 327 K – The only reason my parents were hesitant, we grew up playing, we were three girls in the
 328 family who played different sports and my dad was very much an athlete.
- 329 N – Yep.
- 330 K – Um, so that wasn’t their concern. I did have a friend from the high school team when I was
 331 in high school, he actually broke his neck playing rugby.
- 332 N – Oh. *Danger of the game*
- 333 K – So I think that was the biggest thing. An-and a lot of the, some of the new laws that came in
 334 around the scrums and that were basically from his incident back in ’81.
- 335 N – Okay.
- 336 K – Um, you know, I think that was probably the biggest thing.
- 337 N – Mhmm.
- 338 K – Their hesitation. But, you know, I was out there doing it and they supported me.
- 339 N – Awesome.
- 340 K – Um, you know, if we were travelling somewhere overseas, dad was like ‘Great, have fun,
 341 but you know, think about your space. Be mindful about where you’re going.’ And those kinds
 342 of things. Um, but yeah, they were supportive. Um, I know some of the other girls, um, would
 343 hide their rugby playing from their families.
- 344 N – Mhmm.
- 345 K – Um, I-I-I was a manager in social services so I certainly didn’t talk a lot about it at work.
 346 Um, you know, and in the summer there was a lot more long sleeves and long skirts. **laughs**
- 347 N – Yep. **laughs**
- 348 K – Um, yeah. I did have when I, when I was in Toronto, um, my partner and I we moved from
 349 Ottawa in ’96 and then we started playing for the Yeomen’s which was also a women’s team.
- 350 N – Okay.
- 351 K – Um, and ah, and I did have a supervisor when I worked in Toronto. She saw bruises on my
 352 arm and she would ask me about my partner, not knowing that I played rugby.
- 353 N – Yep.
- 354 K – Um, so you know, so I know other women would often get those questions about concerns
 355 around, you know, domestic violence, um as opposed to thinking you were an athlete and you
 356 were playing a sport.
- 357 N – So how did you kind of navigate around that then when they, did you just say ‘Oh, I play
 358 rugby’ or did you... what was your response?
- 359 K – At the workplace, yeah I would tell them I play a contact sport um, you know and that’s why
 360 I have the bruises and you know, and then I would say ‘And oh, by the way in the winter I play
 361 contact broomball so you know, they’ll still be there even though it will be in the winter.’
- 362 N – **laughs**
- 363 K – Um, so.
- 364 N – There was just always going to be bruises.

- 365 K – Um, yeah, but it was ah, I know one woman I played with she was a lawyer and her legal
 366 firm kind of you know, called her in and were quite concerned and um, and then because-
 367 because she was a hooker so often she'd have like there was a black eye where someone came up
 368 out of the scrum at her. They were like 'Are you, are you really sure it's about sports because
 369 this has happened a couple of times?' *example of another player*
 370 N – Yep. *Can I use information when participants talk about other players' experiences?*
 371 K – Yeah.
 372 N – And so what ah, what did your friends say about you playing rugby?
 373 K – Well, um, I remember one time my-my two of my coworkers from um, they had come out to
 374 watch and at one point I had to call one of the coworkers over because she was at soccer
 375 *laughs* she was at the wrong field.
 376 N – *laughs* Oh.
 377 K – She was at the soccer field *laughs* and I was like 'This is the rugby field.' She was
 378 mortified, she was like 'These women, these women have muscles and their muscles have
 379 bruises and their hitting each other.' And she was just not like, she was beyond mortified, she
 380 couldn't handle it.
 381 N – Oh my gosh.
 382 K – Yeah, um, and then the other coworker was like 'Oh cool! You're having a good time and it
 383 looks like a great group of women who are having fun.' And um, I remember another time I
 384 invited a friend of mine out to watch me play and ah, that was one of the times I got hit in the
 385 nose and I had a nose bleed and then he was like 'That is the grossest sport I ever want to see.
 386 I'm never going again.' And he was just like done with it.
 387 N – Oh my gosh.
 388 K – Yeah.
 389 N – So when you, when you would encounter people that um, had an issue with women playing
 390 rugby, how did you or maybe the teammates if you guys were together, how did you deal with it?
 391 K – Well you know, I think we would just talk to them about the benefits. You know, like that it-
 392 it's, while yes it is a physical sport, it is a challenge. Like it's great to have that physical
 393 challenge to work as a team and to accomplish a goal.
 394 N – Mhmm.
 395 K – Um, I always, I always present rugby as a worldwide sorority. In that, when I'm on a team or
 396 I go some place and I say I'm a rugby player, it's an automatic door opener.
 397 N – Yes. *Explaining the community of rugby*
 398 K – And in the same way, people have come into my city and if they need a place to stay and
 399 they're a rugby player, there's no question that people will help you out. Um, so I-I always
 400 presented it as it's no different, it's actually better than a sorority for a college or university
 401 because it's worldwide.
 402 N – Yeah.
 403 K – Um, and just trying to show them the positive of it. And there'd be sometimes where people
 404 were just stuck in their ways and ignorant in the same way that they probably thought women
 405 shouldn't have the vote, should dress a certain way or you know, have an independent thought,
 406 nor should they play rugby.
 407 N – Mhm.
 408 K – You know, there's sort of sometimes where you need to just go 'You're just really not open
 409 minded to women doing a lot of stuff that they want to do anyway regardless if it's a sport.'
 410 N – Yeah. *Sometimes have to just accept*

411 K – So, you know.
 412 N – Yeah, rugby is truly unique that way. Where, you know, you can play any other sport and
 413 you say ‘Oh, I play basketball.’ ‘Oh cool.’ ‘Oh I play volleyball.’ ‘Oh sure, that’s great.’
 414 K – Yeah, exactly.
 415 N – But rugby is just and it’s hard to explain to people when they don’t understand it. That...
 416 K – Yes.
 417 N – ...as soon as I say ‘I play rugby.’ Then it’s like you said, it’s an automatic door... if you’re
 418 out of the country or somewhere else it’s, you know you’ve automatically made friends or
 419 you’ve found a place to stay or... it’s really unique that way.
 420 K – Yes, exactly.
 421 N – So, now this one’s a bit unique. Um, one of my questions that I have here is what support did
 422 your women’s team have from your club, but it being a solely women’s... because it’s talking
 423 about the executive, so what did the executive committee, you know how many women were on
 424 it or, or those types of things and what did the men’s team, how did they feel about it.
 425 K – Yes.
 426 N – Yours is kind of a unique situation in that way. How, how is the executive committee, how
 427 did you guys form that and then, and was it different because I know that you’ve said you played
 428 for a variety of clubs, um, which we’ll get into as well. How have you found the experience
 429 while playing with the Ottawa Banshees different from say being with the Hamilton Hornets or
 430 being with a team that has a men’s side and a women’s side?
 431 K – Right, with-with the Ottawa Banshees we-we functioned as any other club would. We had an
 432 annual general meeting, we had elections, we had different board positions and committees.
 433 N – Mhmm.
 434 K – Um, and we just worked together. So I found that um, you know, when it came time for a
 435 fundraising event we’d come up with, let’s throw some ideas out there, what have we decided on
 436 an-and then let’s move forward and then you’d start looking at the skill sets. So who has, who’s
 437 working in marketing. Who’s working in sales. What connections do we have? And it had just
 438 become, we’d map it out and we’d all have our marching orders and we’d move forward.
 439 N – Mhmm.
 440 K – Um, so I think that’s probably a benefit then when you have women in a mixed club, that
 441 when you have that cohesive working together, it works well. Um, so yeah, when I worked,
 442 when I was in Ottawa, the Banshees, we were very much structured that way where we had
 443 formed our own executive and did fundraising and um, there was no difference from a club with
 444 men or a larger club.
 445 N – Mhmm.
 446 K – Um, you know, playing with the Yeomen’s, um, with the Toronto club my understanding
 447 was that the women used to be affiliated with the men.
 448 N – Mhmm.
 449 K – Um, and the philosophy of how the men played rugby and maybe how they conducted
 450 themselves was not what the women wanted to be, wanted to be affiliated with. Um, so the
 451 women um, separated on their own. So, they again would do, you know, fundraising and there
 452 would be different people who would take a lead on working on different things and everyone
 453 would just pull together and figure out who would do fundraising or um, if there was a club
 454 member, I remember one of the girls, I remember her house burnt down and actually she was a
 455 club member so there was no question, it was just come together and we’re doing fundraising

↳ Community of rugby

Some club
teams left
the men's side
ble of how
they conducted
themselves

456 and we're getting things pulled together to support these two women who lost their home and
 457 their belongings. [Discussion of current club]
 458 N – Mhmm.
 459 K – Um, and now I'm with Hamilton. Um, so I moved to Hamilton 2008. At the time I wasn't
 460 playing rugby. Um, but I came out retirement.
 461 *both laugh*
 462 K – And joined the Hamilton club. I had a couple years off and the reason I went back was, you
 463 know, I always said I wanted to play a game when I was 50 and that's a joke when you're like
 464 24-25, but when you're 49 drinking martinis in your backyard with your rugby girls *both
 465 laugh* um, my spouse, Rachel, who I met in Ottawa, she's played for a number of years. Her
 466 and some of the other girls joined the Hamilton Hornets.
 467 N – Mhmm.
 468 K – Forged my name and back to playing rugby. And um, the women's team their numbers were
 469 low so a bunch of us old girls went out and what we didn't have in speed we had in technique.
 470 N – Yeah.
 471 K – And experience. Um, and now it's, I'm going into my third year with the Hamilton Hornets.
 472 N – Wow. That's amazing!
 473 *both laugh*
 474 N – You got pulled back in eh!
 475 K – I haven't gotten back on the field this year because I had some surgery so I just started
 476 practicing the last couple weeks, but I'm hoping before the summer's out I'll get a couple of
 477 games in.
 478 N – Wow. Are you healing up well?
 479 K – Yeah, you know, when you get older, everything takes a little longer. *both laugh* So, but
 480 yeah, no. I had surgery on my legs so the contact and stuff is just taking time to make sure that
 481 everything is okay there, but.
 482 N – Yeah.
 483 K – I definitely know that I'll be, um, I'll be back into some games.
 484 N – Oh, that's amazing.
 485 K – Before the summer's out. Yeah. Um, and I-I'm the women's rep with the Hamilton Hornets.
 486 I've been, this is my second year being the women's rep. Um, and I find now being in a club
 487 where there's men and women, there are different um, there are different things that come up and
 488 you know, the executive works the same. Um, what I've found is sometimes there was this
 489 history that people just thought everybody knew and understood and because of my business
 490 background I'm like 'Well you're saying that, but I don't have the history on that. What does
 491 that mean? Or what are the expectations, you know? What do I need to communicate back to the
 492 women?' Um though I found with having a few more women on the executive, it's really
 493 becoming a very cohesive club.
 494 N – Mhmm.
 495 K – And it's really about working together. It's not about supporting the men's program or the
 496 junior's program or the women's program. It's about supporting the club.
 497 N – Yep.
 498 K – Um, though in that regard, you know, we've have some strong women who are business
 499 women come in um, and help and work with-with the other members who have still been there
 500 on the executive and I think they see the positive side of it.
 501 N – Mhmm.

502 K – Um, because it's not about this is what we want to do for the women. It's about what we
 503 want to do for the club.
 504 N – Yep. So, so kind of going back, um, to the executive with the Ottawa Banshees and I was
 505 just wondering how many women um, when you were playing with them, how many women did
 506 you have on your team?
 507 K – Ah, actually we got up, my last couple of years with the Ottawa Banshees, we had enough
 508 for two full squads.
 509 N – Wow.
 510 K – And ah subs.
 511 N – Wow.
 512 K – We had an A and a B division team with the Ottawa Banshees. Um, and within our club we
 513 had people who were like myself, I played provincial, we had a few members play provincial
 514 rugby. We had people going for Canada. Um, so we were quite a high level caliber rugby.
 515 N – Yep.
 516 K – Um, and with our B division team, again it was about younger players skill development,
 517 some people who were a little bit older who just wanted to play, but you know weren't
 518 necessarily wanting to try for provincial or Canada where our A division team was very much
 519 more of that, so good.
 520 N – Wow.
 521 K – Yeah.
 522 N – So that was your first club team then with the Ottawa Banshees, correct?
 523 K – Yes, yes.
 524 N – So, what was your, do you want to just kind of do an overview of-of who you played for and
 525 you know, kind of what years you-you played for them?
 526 K – Yeah, so from '85-1996 I was with the Ottawa Banshees.
 527 N – Mhmm.
 528 K – And then in 1996 I moved to Toronto and that's when I started playing with the Yeomen's.
 529 Um, myself and my partner Rachel. The reason we played for the Yeomen's was a former
 530 Banshee had gone to Toronto as well.
 531 N – Mhmm.
 532 K – And she was playing for the Yeomen's and she just really liked the club, she really liked the
 533 women and how they played and you know, how they socialized.
 534 N – Yep.
 535 K – That's how we picked the Yeomen's. And then, I'm just trying to think and-and then in
 536 200... so it was '96, I'm just trying to think. So my son was born in 2003, I was back in 2004. In
 537 2002 I had an injury and I was out for a year. So technically like through the Yeomen's I was
 538 with them, that club, in some regard and involvement from '96 until about 2004. Ah, and then I
 539 had a couple years off. And then again, my spouse and I and my son we moved to Hamilton in
 540 2008.
 541 N – Wow. And then you also said that you played for the provincial team, correct?
 542 K – Yeah. That one I think would have been, I think it was 1987. [That was the first women's
 543 Ontario team.] - Possible future research
 544 N – What was that like?
 545 K – It was, it was interesting. *laughs* It was fun. Um, I believe there was, there was Sue Chalk,
 546 there was I mean there was about 4 or 5 of us who went from [Ottawa to Fletcher's Fields for the
 547 tryouts.]

548 N – Yep.
 549 K – And basically there was just a ton of women, mostly from Toronto area, and ah who came
 550 out to try for the provincial team and they just threw you on teams and you tried out that one day.
 551 N – Oh.
 552 K – [And then you went up to Fletcher's Fields up to the club house and they basically read off
 553 your name if you made the long list for the Ontario team.]
 554 N – Oh my gosh.
 555 K – [So people were crying because they were devastated and people were crying because they
 556 were excited.]
 557 N – Oh my gosh.
 558 K – Yeah it was brutal, it was brutal.
 559 *both laugh*
 560 K – Um, and then after that all of the practices were happening at the Ajax Wanderers fields
 561 because a lot of the players were from the Toronto area.
 562 N – Yeah.
 563 K – [So the few of us from Ottawa who made the Ontario team, we would play our game on
 564 Saturday, we would get in the car and we'd drive from Ottawa to Toronto and we'd stay some
 565 place so that we'd be there ready for the Sunday practice that ran at like 10:30 or 11:00. So we'd
 566 do the Ontario practice and then we'd drive back to Ottawa.] *Travel*
 567 N – Oh my gosh.
 568 K – Now I know with Ontario now, they move practices around to different parts of Ontario. But
 569 back then it's like, if you want to play this is where the practice is. Get your ass down there. [And
 570 there was no consideration about moving the practices anywhere other than Toronto centre.]
 571 N – Oh my goodness.
 572 K – Yeah. And then that year they had the fir- the first national um, playoffs were held in
 573 Montreal. We ah, we played in Montreal.
 574 N – Well that would have been more convenient. *laughs*
 575 K – It was! It was. You know because, you know because I-I think, you know, because again
 576 there was no, I think we did a little bit of fundraising, some of us did some fundraising, I'm
 577 trying to remember how that actually happened. But even like the kit we had, [it was like a
 578 borrowed kit. [It wasn't like a new Ontario kit, it was like we borrowed a kit from some team, but
 579 yeah we got jackets, we did get jackets.] We did get Ontario Rugby jackets. Um, yes.
 580 N – And what was that, how did that experience differ from the club team, that like, from
 581 playing with um the Ottawa Banshees?
 582 K – Well I have a real respect for some of those western girls, they're pretty big. *laughs*
 583 N – Are they? *laughs*
 584 K – Um, I remember we played Alberta, there was Winnipeg. We played um, Quebec. I think it
 585 was the Alberta team when I had my rib crack.
 586 N – Oh.
 587 K – There was just some solid rugby out there and it was really good rugby and it was just, it was
 588 exciting because like the skill level in all these women and it was um, yeah. *From other provinces*
 589 N – Wow.
 590 K – Yeah. I was playing prop so I got a couple of games in and then I was taken out of one game
 591 and ah, cuz that's, yeah I didn't realize I have gotten my rib cracked. The coach could tell I
 592 wasn't quite doing as well.
 593 N – Yeah.

594 K – So he just pulled me. And of course when the adrenaline wears off you're like 'Oh crap,
 595 that's not good!'
 596 N – Yep, that hurts. **both laugh** Oh definitely. Especially ah, a propping. I always give respect
 597 to the props because oh that's painful. I ah, I'm a second row.
 598 K – Okay.
 599 N – And I-I-I absolutely love it, um...
 600 K – Yeah.
 601 N – And I've had to, I'm not the body size of a, for a prop, I'm taller and I'm bigger, but I'm
 602 taller and um, but I got thrown in to prop a few times and oh my gosh was that... I, it was painful
 603 for me **laughs**
 604 K – Yeah, I shouldn't be a second row and I think I probably played maybe like *a year*, a year
 605 and a half at second row and then I think again it was that other people came into the team and
 606 some were like taller and slimmer and we could you know, they could jump and that, but I did
 607 start as second row. It's been funny I actually been going back and practicing second row...
 608 N – Really?!
 609 K – ...here a little bit with Hamilton.
 610 N – Oh that's...
 611 K – And based on the yeah the body types and people we have out for the team this year.
 612 N – Mhmm.
 613 K – Yeah, so.
 614 N – Is um, is Ahink still playing with Hamilton?
 615 K – She's not.
 616 N – Oh.
 617 K – She actually had ah, she played Mohawk and Hamilton a couple of years and she actually
 618 had a fairly severe concussion from the other year and she hasn't really, her neck an-and she had
 619 a really bad concussion so um, but she's not been playing. But she still comes out and she you
 620 know, she comes out to the club and watches us play and ah, yeah because she's still around.
 621 N – Oh, that's nice. Yeah I played with her uh, with Ontario Summer Games one year.
 622 K – Okay, yeah!
 623 N – Ah, we played together. Yeah, so, and I got to play against her a couple times but then um,
 624 Niagara and Hamilton haven't been in the same division for the past couple years so I haven't
 625 got the chance to see her.
 626 K – Yes, yeah. Now our club, when I, when I went to Hamilton in 2000 and I guess something
 627 13, 12, that would have been 2011, 20-11, um, we were in the Niagara A division.
 628 N – Mhmm.
 629 K – And then we dropped down to the Niagara B division. So now this last year and this year
 630 we've still been in the Niagara B division.
 631 N – It's um, it's been switching up a lot lately, the-the the Niagara A and B I'm finding.
 632 K – Yeah.
 633 N – It's, it's been ah, kind of crazy to see because you know, it used to be Burlington, Hamilton,
 634 you know a bunch of teams and now there's kind of like a swap coming in. I feel like with-with
 635 the Guelph teams coming in...
 636 K – Mhmm.
 637 N – It's made ah, a difference.
 638 K – Yeah. Well this year there was a lot of movement where you had like all of a sudden like
 639 you had two teams come in and then one team, they didn't get the numbers early enough like

640 they were maybe hoping, like if you know, they want to play an exhibition game if they've got
 641 enough people, but it's, they didn't have enough people *early* in the season with the schedule
 642 starting.
 643 N – Oh.
 644 K – Um, so yeah, this year there's been a lot more movement then normal.
 645 N – Yeah.
 646 K – Yeah.
 647 N – Always interesting. **laughs**
 648 K – Yes, yes, exactly.
 649 N – So, um, when you went to Toronto, how long had the Yeomen's been established.
 650 K – The Yeomen's, I'm not sure, and I'm trying to think. Cuz there was one year, if you wanted,
 651 if you wanted a contact person for the Yeomen's...
 652 N – Mhmm.
 653 K – ...I've got like a, cuz I'm still in touch with a lot of those women.
 654 N – Yeah.
 655 K – Um, and I'm just trying to think because there was one year we got together and did like a
 656 little reunion party. But basically we went from bar to bar where we used to drink and **both*
 657 *laugh**
 658 N – That's a great reunion!
 659 K – Um, I'm not sure how many years the Yeomen, what their full history is, but I know
 660 **pauses** that's terrible. Because we did a slideshow and there was a party.
 661 N – Well...
 662 K – I remember the slideshow and I don't know if I have a copy of it.
 663 N – And it's something too that if you think of, you can just e-mail me and-and everything like
 664 that too.
 665 K – Yeah. Yeah, there's a couple of girls that I'm still in touch with, I definitely, um, cuz I know
 666 there was like a little brochure written up and there was the history, there was a DVD, which I
 667 know I have a copy of.
 668 N – Oh yeah, that would be fantastic because I'm also trying to get documents as well so you
 669 know, when these first clubs, like women's clubs teams started, is there any kind of
 670 documentation or is there a history on kind of how it began and things like that and I'm finding
 671 that not a lot of places have access to it or have something like that. Um...
 672 K – But what it is, it's the women themselves, cuz if we weren't affiliated with the men's clubs
 673 and that, like I know for the Banshees that Sue Chalk who you've been in touch with...
 674 N – Mhmm.
 675 K – ...kind of kept a lot of those archives. Like I remember we had these super articles done on
 676 us with the Ottawa Citizen, um for the Ottawa Banshees. So there's certainly was the media
 677 coverage around um, women's rugby. Um, and there might have been, there might have been
 678 something done when we were going to Den Hague to represent Ottawa, because like that was a
 679 huge sports contingency that went over. Like there was hockey, darts, bowling, basketball,
 680 rugby. Like there was multiple sports um, yeah, but I kind definitely, I can um, I can contact a
 681 couple of people to see if there'd be a Yeomen history.
 682 N – Yeah, that would be fantastic.
 683 K – Mhmm. And are you aware of um, Rugby Ontario has recently hired, I have an e-mail
 684 buried, but there's um, Rugby Ontario recently hired somebody and they're starting to try to
 685 document all the people who have been involved with Rugby Ontario. Um...

*Email to ask
for slide show
if she found
it*

Documents

686 N – See, I’ve been trying to contact Rugby Ontario with not much luck of like response.
 687 K – I know that they have a designated person and I um, Sue sent me an update throw Facebook,
 688 that’s where it is. Sue sent me a message through Facebook to say that this person has been hired
 689 and was starting to collect names. I know some of this is probably going to be for
 690 fundraising/solicitation, but they were trying to collect that history of who has been involved
 691 with Rugby Ontario.
 692 N – I did see, my club president had sent out, because I think there was like a job application for
 693 that position.
 694 K – Okay, right.
 695 N – And sent that, so I do know like the position your-you’re talking about. Ah yeah it would
 696 definitely be great to get in contact. Because I know I’ve tried ah to e-mail a few people there
 697 and um, haven’t got a response back so I’m still just plugging away trying to get you know,
 698 something because you know I figured they would have some archives or something of some of
 699 the histories of the club teams or women who played for them, for Ontario and things like that.
 700 K – Right.
 701 N – So, I will definitely try to get in touch there, again.
 702 K – Yeah, yeah.
 703 N – Perfect. Yeah, and ah like I said, if there’s any women that you know of that you think
 704 would be you know, would be willing to be interviewed or things like that, please send them,
 705 send along my information and tell them to get in contact for sure.
 706 K – Yeah, okay, I can send you a few names.
 707 N – Perfect. So, um, back to the interview *laughs*
 708 K – Yeah, seriously *laughs*
 709 N – No, I love, not it’s nice, it’s nice to just kind of talk to because like you said, the person I-I, I
 710 saw that and thought they’d be good to get in contact with when I first saw the posting about it
 711 and it was something that you know, things get busy and you kind of forget about it so that was a
 712 great reminder. Maybe I can try getting in touch there. Perfect.
 713 K – Yeah.
 714 N – So, we kind of talked about that. Um, one thing that um, we didn’t really mention yet is
 715 when you were playing and you were starting out, um, you know playing with Ottawa, in
 716 Ottawa, and things like that in the ‘80s, and kind of throughout your career, did you ever find
 717 that people, you were ridiculed or judged based on playing like, you were ridiculed on your
 718 sexuality based on playing rugby.
 719 K – Oh yeah. *No hesitation given with response* Oh yeah, totally. Oh yeah, of course you had
 720 to be gay.
 721 N – Yeah.
 722 K – You know you’re playing that sport, you know.
 723 N – Yeah.
 724 K – That was, you know. Um, you know, and then if you um, and it’s so funny because like
 725 when I first started playing, um, you know I, that wasn’t an issue and then years later then
 726 Rachel and I, we met through rugby.
 727 N – Mhmm.
 728 K – Which was hysterical cuz when she met me she had only dated men and she didn’t even
 729 consider that you know, being with a woman was an option.
 730 N – Yep.

731 K – Um, and it was more about we as people, because I knew her for a whole year just as a
 732 friend through the rugby club. There was no question that you know, we were going to date
 733 because she was dating guys.
 734 N – Yep.
 735 K – Um, and then at some point we were like ‘Oh!’ She was interested in me and I was
 736 interested in her and her friend said ‘Maybe you two should talk to each other.’ *both laugh*
 737 And now, you know, we’re coming up to our 20th anniversary.
 738 N – Oh my gosh!
 739 K – And we have an 11 year old son and he-he was practically born on the rugby field.
 740 N – Yep.
 741 K – You know, he doesn’t, he’s gone out a couple times to the juniors just for some practices. He
 742 hasn’t started to play yet, but he knows rugby. I just think he’s such a cool kid because he’s
 743 around a cool group of people, men and women.
 744 N – Yeah. Wow, that’s amazing.
 745 K – Um, just how rugby people are. Yeah, yeah.
 746 N – That’s ama... 20 years too, that’s unreal. And you know what, it’s nice, and I’m finding now
 747 with more of like the flag leagues and things like that, that kids are starting to become involved
 748 in rugby. It’s not something where it’s just, you know, in high school. Like when I started, it
 749 was, yo-you didn’t hear about rugby. If, until high school if you didn’t have a family member
 750 that played or something like that.
 751 K – Well I remember when we played in Ottawa one of the women, she lives in the States now,
 752 we’re still connecting through Facebook, but I remember when she had her first child and you
 753 know, she was breastfeeding. Well, that really threw some of the refs because I remember one
 754 game in particular, you know she, it was half time, she ran off she was breastfeeding and you
 755 know, the ref was like you know ‘Players take the field, players take the field!’ and he’s like
 756 yelling. And we’re like you know ‘We’re going to start, you know, we’ll play short.’ And like,
 757 he’s like ‘I want the players on the field!’ and he’s getting all pissed off and we’re like ‘Excuse
 758 me sir, but she’s breastfeeding. We’ll play short.’
 759 N – Yeah!
 760 K – And we will just let, you know, she’ll give you the hi sign and you can just call her back
 761 onto the game. But it was like, he wasn’t impressed with that at all *both laugh* but you know,
 762 it’s like what’s the problem?
 763 N – Yeah.
 764 K – Besides you know, and then as we you know, as we all started to get into different places in
 765 our lives, there’d be kids on the sideline in play pens and um and I remember when we were in
 766 Toronto one of the players her-her brother was old enough to watch the kids, but not you know,
 767 you wouldn’t have him babysitting at night in your house by himself.
 768 N - *laughs*
 769 K – So we would pay him to be on the sidelines. It was pretty much like watch the kids and play
 770 with them.
 771 N - *laughs*
 772 K – Um, because we were either practicing or playing.
 773 N – Yeah.
 774 K – Um, and you, you know, Rachel and I were a different situation cuz we were a gay couple,
 775 but a lot of the women were either single moms or their spouses were playing. Some of the
 776 women had spouses who were playing and it was often that the kids came to rugby with mom,

How she
met her
spouse

Future
Research
Development
of flag
rugby

Interesting
Example

Community
of
rugby

777 not dad to rugby practice. I see a difference now in like the Hamilton club. That's one thing I
 778 noticed has changed is that you see more the men having their kids with them on the sidelines at
 779 the games and we all kind of help each other out or you know, they show up with their kids
 780 because you know, their popping over to practice so. Um, that's the difference that I think of in
 781 this sport in general.

782 N – Yeah.

783 K – And just parenting and how parenting is happening these days.

784 N – Well it's nice to see, and it's nice to see when all of them come out too an-and sometimes
 785 there's a few that are old enough where they can kind of watch the young ones and also keep
 786 them...

787 K – Exactly! Yeah, yeah.

788 N – Yeah, keep them occupied and entertained.

789 K – Mhmm, exactly. And that's part of that community.

790 N – Yes.

791 K – Cuz that's what it... it's a community within a community. And that's really nice.

792 N – Everyone looks out too, you know. Even if you're not necessarily watching them, if you see
 793 one of the kids kind of going off, there's someone that's going to go and grab them and you
 794 know. It is, it is really a community for sure.

795 K – Mhmm, very much so, yeah.

796 N – So, um, when you found that you were kind of being, i-if you got you know, questioned or
 797 things like that based on your sexuality and, how did you respond t-to those comments?

798 K – Ah, for me personally, um, I sort of had, I very much had compartmentalized places within
 799 my life. So I had, here's my work life, here's my rugby life, here's my, here's my social life.

800 N – Yep.

801 K – Um, and I kept them very separate. And then when I you know, when I, when I started,
 802 when I started to come out and started going and socializing more in the gay community, I didn't
 803 include the rugby women in that. It was very separate. So I might go socialize with the women
 804 for a little bit and then I'm like 'Well I'm going to go, I'm going to leave and hook up with some
 805 of my other friends' and then I was like off to the gay bar and that side of my life.

806 N – Mhmm.

807 K – And it was very separate. Um, and then as the years went on, I think you know, you start to
 808 feel, whether it was me changing my acceptance of where I was at in my life um, you know, we
 809 had a couple other women who um, either were now dating or were coming out or were just, and
 810 you found that the women's team was accepting.

811 N – Mhmm.

812 K – Um, and some people might have had, I mean you had to be really respectful because some
 813 people cuz some people may have this as their comfort level so you were respectful when you
 814 were on the road, staying in hotels. You were respectful in the shower rooms and those type of
 815 things.

816 N – Yep.

817 K – But I mean that's just what you have to do anyway in any kind of sport when you don't want
 818 people to feel uncomfortable for whatever reason.

819 N – Mhmm.

820 K – Um, but I never felt, um, in any way ostracized. And if anything we had, even with our
 821 Toronto team, there'd be a couple girls who I knew were younger and I could just tell that they
 822 weren't settled in where they were with their sexuality.

Early years,
women
had to take
children

- 823 N – Yeah.
- 824 K – It didn't even have to be a question. You were just like 'Here's Rachel and I as a couple and
 825 here we are with a child and this is, we're comfortable in our life so you don't need to come out
 826 to us. You don't need to disclose. If you're not sure, but you're now on a team that is
 827 comfortable with who you are, whatever you decide to be.' There's an automatic, it takes the
 828 wall down.]
- 829 N – Yep.
- 830 K – [Because they're like 'Oh, this team has got straight women. This team has got gay women.
 831 This team has got straight women with kids, gay women with kids. I can just, I can just be
 832 comfortable.] Um, and I think it's just, it takes a lot of barriers down for people.]
- 833 N – Yeah. So, how did you find your experiences change playing on like the various teams that
 834 you did?
- 835 K – Um, well I think when I, because-because when we moved to Toronto, one of the women
 836 who had been with the Banshees, she had also just a phenomenal player. Um, she was playing
 837 um, I think she was long listed for Canada and she played second row and number 8. But she had
 838 moved to Toronto about a year before us um so then when we came they were like 'Oh, you
 839 played for the Banshees and you know Ingrid.' An-and we just got in there and we were solid
 840 hard rugby players.
- 841 N – Mhmm.
- 842 K – It was, we didn't miss a beat.
- 843 N – Yep.
- 844 K – Um, and we were with them for a number of years so I can think of at least 3, 4 different
 845 coaching, male coaches. There was, we had Ev, then we had, there was Dave and another guy
 846 coached together and we had Sandro and then we had Coco. So I can think of you know, like just
 847 the coaches that we had with the Toronto team. Um, yeah. So and then with going to Hamilton,
 848 um, there was the club and it was a mixed club and we were coming in as old girls to help the
 849 women an-and that-that club was kind of rebuilding some of the um, the relationship and
 850 reputation with the women's side. So there was certainly some history there.
- 851 N – Mhmm.
- 852 K – Um, some positives, some negatives about women's rugby and their club. Um, so you know,
 853 now the club was going to have a women's team again, but because a few of us were these old
 854 girls who were working women and loved rugby and had rugby history, um, and we were the
 855 kind of women who came in and said 'Hey this is our new club. We're going to help the club.
 856 What do we need to do?' Um, I think that the last couple of years, some of those relationships
 857 have been really positive. Um, and then I think we've rebuilt some bridges.
- 858 N – That's great.
- 859 K – Where there had been a bit of a negative reputation having the-the women's side.
- 860 N – That's great trying to build things back up. And the way you're saying it too, that you know,
 861 you're concerned about the club, that it's not just the junior program or the, you know, it's not
 862 separated.
- 863 K – Yeah.
- 864 N – That you guys are kind of coming together now, that's awesome.
- 865 K – Yeah. So when I was in Ott... it was funny, the year we moved to Toronto, that was 1996,
 866 the Ottawa Banshees, they actually did have several players separate from the Ottawa Banshees.
 867 And that was the year that the Toron- that the Ottawa Irish set up their women's squad.
- 868 N – Oh.

later
years

Hamilton
Club

Interesting
Aside

- 869 K – So there was some real, like, bad blood there. **both laugh** So the Ottawa Ban... there was
 870 the Banshees had quite the team gutted quite a bit.
 871 N – Wow.
 872 K – And ah, the men's team, the Ottawa-the Toronto-the Ottawa Irish set up a women's side.
 873 N – Oh.
 874 K – You know, rugby's got politics right.
 875 N – Yeah.
 876 K – Yeah.
 877 N – So, what did you enjoy most, um, when you played your first year on the ah, Ottawa
 878 Banshees?
 879 K – I feel like it, it was, let's face it, people don't say this, but it's really satisfying to have a
 880 great physical outlet.
 881 N – Mhmm.
 882 K – When you've got stress in your life and you can go out and you've got this hard physical
 883 sport and it's person against person, it's player against player, it's team against team, it is a really
 884 healthy thing.
 885 N – Mhmm.
 886 K – Um, and I coached high school for a couple of years when I was in Ottawa and some of the
 887 girls who came out the first year I coached it was all the sporty girls. And then the second year I
 888 coached, I had an information day and then the next year it was girls who wouldn't probably ever
 889 think to come out and do a sport. And some of those girls were struggling with school and I'm
 890 like 'If you want to stay on this team, you need to go to class.' (And I think rugby kept some of
 891 those girls in school...)
 892 N – Yeah.
 893 K – (...because now they had a way to yell...)
 894 N – Yep.
 895 K – (...they had physical aggression and to not have it be illegal **both laugh** that's a healthy
 896 thing.)
 897 N – Yep.
 898 K – You know and whether you're 18 or 50... **laughs**
 899 N – It's a great outlet!
 900 K – Is big! Um, you know, so often men get to play football, men get to box, men get to do all
 901 these things and now you're seeing over the years that women are able to do these sports and it's
 902 healthy to have those outlets.
 903 N – Yep. That's awesome. So, what was your opinion of rugby prior to playing and how did it
 904 change, if at all, when you began to play.
 905 K – My opinion of rugby, I had two incidents of rugby players and I-I remember them when I
 906 went to Ottawa and when Barb, my coworker, invited me to the rugby park I'm just like 'Ah, I
 907 don't know, rugby?' My first remembrance was my friend from high school who he actually did
 908 the Commonwealth Games and that was, it was 1981. It was during a practice he broke his neck.
 909 N – Mhmm.
 910 K – He had just graduated from high school, was getting ready for the Commonwealth Games,
 911 broke his neck and quadriplegic.
 912 N – Yeah.
 913 K – So that was one reference from rugby. And my second reference of rugby when I had
 914 finished high school I had gone to a, um, a Baptist Youth Retreat, okay. **both laugh** So here I

915 am at the Baptist Youth Retreat at the, you know, um, it was in like Wolfville, Nova Scotia. So
 916 they had, I loved the administrators. They booked the Baptist Youth Retreat and the other people
 917 staying at the community college were a rugby team.
 918 N - *laughs*
 919 K - I'm like 'Who the hell puts these two groups together on the calendar?!' Like really?
 920 *both laugh*
 921 N - Oh my gosh.
 922 K - And I remember, like I just kept looking at all these like really big, scary, ugly, toothless,
 923 rude, lewd, crude men thinking 'I'm going to pray for you.' *both laugh* And then I moved to
 924 Ottawa and my coworker's like 'Well come out and go watch rugby and meet rugby people.'
 925 And I was just like 'Really?' *both laugh* So I wasn't overly positive a-at first about rugby, not
 926 at all.
 927 N - So why did you decide to ah, go out? *laughs*
 928 K - I think the difference was it was a group of full women and like they're like playing this
 929 sport and I'm like 'Okay, this is kind of neat and I'm going to try it.' And it was fun. It was a
 930 way for me to meet a new social circle.
 931 N - Yeah. And so, how did your-your views kind of change after you began playing?
 932 K - Ah, I thought some of the men were rude, crude and lewd. I thought some of the women
 933 were rude, crude and lewd and I thought you know, these are great people and this is a lot of fun
 934 and there's some really neat people here.
 935 N - Mhmm.
 936 K - Cuz people are people.
 937 N - Yeah.
 938 K - Yeah.
 939 N - And did playing rugby change or alter the way you felt about yourself?
 940 K - I definitely think so, yes. I think I'm much more um, assertive. I think I'm positive in who I
 941 am. Um, I just always feel that I-I don't think I would be a victim.
 942 N - Mhmm.
 943 K - I think if I was a victim it would be out of extreme circumstances. I don't think I'm the type
 944 of women who can easily be victimized. (X)
 945 N - Mhmm.
 946 K - And I think a lot of women when they play rugby, not all, certainly not all, but I think some,
 947 you-you have a different persona and yo-you carry yourself in a different way.
 948 N - Yeah, definitely. That's awesome.
 949 K - Yeah.
 950 N - Um, so is there anything else that I may not have asked that you want to mention? Or
 951 anything that you can think of that maybe I haven't touched upon yet?
 952 K - Um, you know I-I think, I think there's still a lot of education still to be done when you look
 953 at different clubs and women's rugby. Um, you know, you still don't have a lot of women's refs.
 954 N - Yep.
 955 K - You still don't have a lot of women's coaches. I know our club is very positive in trying
 956 with the Hamilton club in trying to encourage women to get involved with coaching and um, also
 957 there's you know work schedules and that kind of thing that um, just kind of impedes that.
 958 N - Mhmm.
 959 K - Um, you know and you have some work places that will be very supportive of their staff
 960 doing volunteerism. Um, but you still, I still think you probably have some who are 'Oh, you're

*Education
 still needed
 in future*

961 going to help hockey or you're going to help with the soccer kids.' I don't know if people will
 962 make that leap with 'Oh you're going to go help with your community rugby team.'

963 N – Yeah.

964 K – Right? [Um, I don't know if it still has the same kind of community involvement an-and
 965 respect that, not respect but just awareness...]

966 N – That other sports have.

967 K – [That some of the other sports have. Yes, yes.]

968 N – And I know it ah, I-I also ref. I've been refing for 5 years now and um, I ref a lot of the high
 969 school teams...

970 K – Right.

971 N – ...in Niagara and there was about 6 or 7, I think 7 of us and I was the only, the only female.
 972 And I, th-th-the men that I ref with, they've been amazing, um, but I know, what I feel bad for
 973 are, you know, some of the girls um, that I ref, and you know when I come on it's nice to see
 974 them say 'Oh we have you.' And 'That's awesome.' And 'That's exciting.' And I've had the
 975 chance to talk to a few of them and they've told me that they just wish there were a few more
 976 female refs because they say 'You know, sometimes the male refs don't get it, they don't get us
 977 or they-they don't understand, like we get frustrated or they yell at us and we don't get why.' Not
 978 yell at us but you know when they say something and you know, it's to the point and this is what
 979 it is and I find with-with guys you can usually do that and say 'Okay, penalty, back 10. This is
 980 what we're doing.'

981 K – Yes.

982 N – But, you know, a lot of them say 'Well, you know, they don't explain it and we don't
 983 understand it and then we get upset.' And it would be nice for them to see more women out and
 984 showing that you can play, you can ref, you can coach an-and to also have a woman doing those
 985 things for them, I think it would make a bit of a difference as well.

986 K – Well, and I also think too um, you know, I've ah, I'm a fairly formidable kind of woman in
 987 my, I don't think I'm large, but I-I have a presence about me let's just say.

988 N – Mhmm.

989 K – I have a presence about me and I-I still think that you can have really hard aggressive rugby
 990 and when you have really hard aggressive rugby, um, I think sometimes the ref um, would
 991 penalize a woman or discount it more than they would with males, men playing rugby.

992 N – Mhmm.

993 K – When you have a really aggressive game.

994 N – Mhmm.

995 K – I still think there's a little bit oh inequity in what the guys...

996 N – Can do.

997 K – ...or what they should do versus what the women do or should do and um, sometimes you do
 998 see that in your, um, the ref.

999 N – Yeah.

1000 K – Their interacting with women.

1001 N – It's very true.

1002 K – Yes. So I-I, what I find so frustrating is like when I have a ref coming out and it's like I want
 1003 you to ref the game and while you know, you may be early in the season and say 'Well you
 1004 know, we've got a fairly new pack, it's our first game.' You want that, you know working
 1005 together so everyone's safe. I've had some refs who think they're now kind of coaching the-the
 1006 women.

- 1007 N – Yes, yes.
 1008 K – And reffing. Um, you know, so again it's about educating refs and where the women are at
 1009 and um, where you wouldn't see that, you wouldn't see them doing with that, with the men's
 1010 teams.
 1011 N – Mhmm.
 1012 K – They wouldn't do that with a senior men's team.
 1013 N – No.
 1014 K – Um, so when you've seen refs who treat the women differently, um, last year we had a
 1015 situation where we had three home games, um, the women of course always you know, have 12,
 1016 noon, games...
 1017 N – Yep, yep.
 1018 K – ...and there team was running a bit late, so our ref said 'Well, we can start the game a little
 1019 bit later.' Great. We're playing, it's the final game of the season, um, and then the next ref
 1020 showed up and he's like 'Well, you know, you're going to have to play non-stop time and we're
 1021 going to finish at this time.' And I'm looking at him and I'm like 'We're down by 3, it's our final
 1022 game, there's 10 minutes left and you want to call the game so the men can start on time?'
 1023 N – No.
 1024 K – I was like, and I'm the women's rep, um, when at that point I had been on the field like cuz
 1025 as a prop, you know, you're getting subbed in and out and I went up to the other visiting team,
 1026 their coach, their captain and I said 'Are you okay with this?' It's like, it's our home game, we
 1027 have like a big event planned, so there was like a meal planned so it's not like everyone has to
 1028 rush away and yet, I was just, and then our president came running up and we're negotiating with
 1029 this ref and I'm just like, I don't think he ever would have dared do that to a men's team.
 1030 N – No. And then the negotiation part is taking up more time than if you just would have you
 1031 know, played through.
 1032 K – Yep.
 1033 N – No, that's very true. And...
 1034 K – It was just so evident that you're doing this and you're going to blow off the women's game.
 1035 N – Because it doesn't matter to them.
 1036 K – For the men. Yep.
 1037 N – It's, it's, some, you can still tell that some people think it's second tier and that 'Oh, it's just
 1038 the women's game.'
 1039 K – Yes. Well and the other ref who was being very supportive an-and you know who we'd had
 1040 a few times, he just you know, he made a comment you know saying 'Sometimes um' he goes
 1041 'I'm sorry.' And he was apologetic, he felt really bad on what was happening as a ref.
 1042 N – Mhmm.
 1043 K – And you know, we-we can, we got, we negotiated with everybody and the game continued
 1044 and he just said at the end, I'm getting him to sign the game sheet and he goes 'You know, I just,
 1045 I'm sorry and I feel really bad that sometimes that ah, that the girl's teams don't, you know, have
 1046 the same level of respect or get that same level of reffing.' And I just said 'Well that might be the
 1047 case with the girl's teams, but this is a women's team and that's not acceptable.' And we didn't
 1048 accept it.
 1049 N – Yeah.
 1050 K – And it was just like, we want our time **both laugh** You know, um, so that is, you know I'm
 1051 a 51 year old woman and you're telling me that I have to get out of the sandbox? No, I don't
 1052 think so.

*Example
of inequality
from
current
team*

1053 N – Yeah.
 1054 K – It's just like, you're not, that's not acceptable. We play our dues, we get our time just like
 1055 the men's team. So you know, you still encounter, um, some of those things, but luckily I think
 1056 it's less and less.
 1057 N – Yeah. And I think you also have more women who are willing to say 'No! Like no. We're
 1058 not going to take this. This is, we're playing, let us play and this is how it's going to be like why
 1059 should we have it any different than the men's teams?' You know?
 1060 K – Yep. And the flip side of that is we've had some great rugby where you know, men come out
 1061 and they're watching our game and like that was just really solid rugby and they're like
 1062 commenting on the finesse and the speed of the ball handling and um, because women
 1063 sometimes do play a little bit differently.
 1064 N – Yes, I completely agree. An-and some of the women I've talked to have said the same thing.
 1065 You know where th-there's that finesse versus the strength, not th-the strength, but sometimes
 1066 yo-you watch men's and it's extremely aggressive.
 1067 K – Yes, yes.
 1068 N – And the women kind of use you know, the finesse and the angles and things like that. If you
 1069 watch the games it-it's, it's played a bit different. Same laws and all of that stuff, but there's a bit
 1070 of a difference there definitely.
 1071 K – Yep, yep. And at the same time, I mean, we've got some pretty strong women and you
 1072 know, had to leave the field by ambulance because they just took a really hard hit from another
 1073 woman, um.
 1074 N – I find there's always a lot of surprise by that too. Like when there's some good hits. Like
 1075 from the sideline like you'll, you'll hear it an-and after the game I-I've heard some men come up
 1076 and say 'Wow! Like I, that-that hit or you know.' Or they'll go up to the person that did it and
 1077 say 'Wow, I didn't, didn't realize you could hit like that.'
 1078 K – Yeah, exactly. It just like, well why can't I? It's rugby. And that's what we're training to do.
 1079 Um, yeah so, yeah so you know. But at the same time, the fact that the men are coming up and
 1080 just acknowledging that you know, well then I do view that as a positive step.
 1081 N – Yes.
 1082 K – Cuz they're giving that recognition of 'That was a really nice hit.' And that's what they
 1083 would do with one of the guys.
 1084 N – Mhmm.
 1085 K – So it's respect for what you're doing in the game, you know.
 1086 N – Awesome. Yeah, I-I agree. ***laughs***
 1087 K – Yeah.
 1088 N – Well it's...
 1089 K – It's a great sport, you know, and I'm moving into it as I get older. And you know, we need
 1090 more women with Hamilton so we can start an Old Girls squad. That's probably my next goal.
 1091 ***both laugh***
 1092 N – I love it. That's awesome.
 1093 K – So, I will um, do you have any other questions for myself?
 1094 N – No, I'm done. I'm done.
 1095 K – Okay, so what I will do is I have made a note and I will um, it probably won't be tonight, but
 1096 I will shoot you the contact names for some people from, for some women from the Yeomen's
 1097 um, who would probably have more of that history. And then I'll look up the um, the contact

1098 information for um, Rugby Ontario with the new person that they've hired who is trying to
 1099 collect names of Ontario people.
 1100 N – That would be fantastic.
 1101 K – Great!
 1102 N – Thank you so much and it's been wonderful speak- chatting with you. I've really appreciated
 1103 it.
 1104 K – Do you ever get to Hamilton to do any reffing.
 1105 N – I haven't, no I haven't. I...
 1106 K – Well you'll have to put a request in cuz it-it's good hard rugby and you, have you done
 1107 men's as well?
 1108 N – Yes, I've done some yep.
 1109 K – Yep.
 1110 N – Well I have, one of the men who has reffed, he's been on the provincial panel and things like
 1111 that. He's been trying to get me to move up in reffing, um, but I still want to play *laughs* Cuz
 1112 ah...
 1113 K – Yeah, it's hard, yeah.
 1114 N – I know! Cuz he's like 'Well, you know, you've been doing really great.' And he's been
 1115 trying to get me to keep moving up. I-I've reffed a few men's games and things like that and
 1116 women's and, but he goes 'You know, you're going to have to focus on reffing.' And I tell him
 1117 'I don't know if I'm ready t-to, to take a back seat on playing yet.' so.
 1118 K – You know what, I think, I think when you still have that passion to be on the field, I think
 1119 you have to be true to that.
 1120 N – Yeah.
 1121 K – Because you know, I'm turning 52 this summer, I went back and I'm still playing and like I
 1122 say, like I started with I couldn't do a full game and I was you know, you get to that point with
 1123 impact stuff so I know if I go out there for the 20-30 minutes it-it's strategic and it makes a
 1124 difference and you know, with my fitness improving last year, I was playing full games and I
 1125 was playing full games in that B division. This year with the surgery I'm not out there yet. I'm
 1126 starting to practice again, but I still have that passion to play and whether it's move to, I can play
 1127 B division rugby and help the younger girls or we get an Old Girls squad and you play a few
 1128 times a year, you know, but if you've got that passion. But I am starting to move into more
 1129 coaching and administrative things with the rugby club.
 1130 N – Mhmm.
 1131 K – Um, yeah because really you only have so much tape in your bag.
 1132 N – Yeah.
 1133 *both laugh*
 1134 K – So.
 1135 N – Well then you go into someone else's bag and you grab some more! *laughs*
 1136 K – Yeah, exactly. You know, if you have that physical ability to still play, you still have that
 1137 passion...
 1138 N – Yeah.
 1139 K - ...the you know, cuz you can see, you can see where reffing can certainly, can have a lot
 1140 more longevity in reffing than you can in playing.
 1141 N – Oh definitely and you know the traveling that you can do an-and things like that where you
 1142 can ref all different, all different places and different levels. It intrigues me a lot and I do like
 1143 reffing. I've really come to love it. I didn't think I was... I started coaching when I went to

1144 university. I went back to my high school and started coaching there and I liked it, but I thought I
 1145 would love it more and my dad being, you know, my dad says 'Oh well, what about reffing?'
 1146 and I thought 'Okay, well I'll do it just to kind of say I did it.'
 1147 K – Right.
 1148 N – And I loved it so much more than I expected and it gave me a different view and respect of
 1149 the game and ah, that I've felt has benefited me on the field. And I do love it, but I think you're
 1150 right. When you just, I still love playing too much to say 'I'm going to take reffing like mo- like
 1151 seriously.'
 1152 K – Yeah, yes.
 1153 N – At this point. *laughs*
 1154 K – Yeah, I think if you've got that, if you've got that ability to stay out there and um, do that
 1155 you know, hang onto that as long as you can cuz you know, yo-you certainly can be out there
 1156 reffing a lot longer and to a lot later, to a lot later ago, so yeah.
 1157 N – Yeah.
 1158 *both laugh*
 1159 K – Well, I've got to let you go. Just enjoy that wave. So if you ever make it to Hamilton, um, by
 1160 all means certainly you know, um pop into the Hamilton Hornets club.
 1161 N – Yeah.
 1162 K – We're out at the Mohawk Sports Park and um, yeah maybe our paths will cross at some
 1163 point.
 1164 N – Yeah, I'll introduce myself in person. *laughs*
 1165 K – Definitely, sounds good. *laughs*
 1166 N – Alright, thank you so much!
 1167 K – Good chatting with you. Okay take care.
 1168 N – You too. Bye.
 1169 K – Bye.

Appendix E – Analysis of Cross Interview Comparison

CHAPTER 4

Cross Interview Comparison

To display the findings from cross interview comparison, I have listed each question asked during the interviews followed by the corresponding findings.

1) When did you first hear about rugby?

Two of the women interviewed revealed that they were already aware of rugby prior to their participation in the sport. One participant's father played, coached and refereed rugby. I also found that knowledge of rugby prior to playing correlates to their parent's place of birth. Those who had parents born in countries where rugby is prevalent were aware of the sport and had basic knowledge of the Laws of the game at a young age. Participants who did not have parents who were familiar with rugby noted that they were not aware of the sport until they reached high school. A participant disclosed that she learned about rugby through a high school teacher who played and thought she too would be interested in rugby.

a. Why did you decide to play rugby?

Women stated that they decided to play rugby for a variety of reasons. Reasons why participants played rugby included: was an athlete/played other sports growing up, it seemed like an interesting sport, the fast pace nature of the game, intellectual aspect of the game, physical nature of the sport, playing in a team environment, empowerment of playing a contact sport, ability to play a sport that did not conform to gender norms, attraction to a male player and assertive/physical nature of the game.

As mentioned above, one of the participants mentioned that she played rugby because she enjoyed the contact aspect of the game and did not always conform to gender norms associated with being a girl. Suzanne (Interview 4, July 9, 2014) stated, “I guess I was always a bit of a rebel as a kid.” Other participants enjoyed that they were able to play a sport where contact was legal. Both Annemaree (Interview 5, March 28, 2015) and Jane (Interview 6, March 31, 2015) mentioned that they tended to foul out or get penalties in other sports for being too aggressive or physical. Both enjoyed playing a sport where it was accepted and necessary to have contact with other players.

b. What was your interest in rugby that led you to play the sport?

There were a variety of reasons mentioned by the pioneer players interviewed regarding their interest in playing rugby. The interest to play rugby which was stated most frequently was the contact aspect of the game. The women interviewed stated that there were no other opportunities available to them in sport prior to rugby that allowed them to play a contact sport. The interviewees stated on multiple occasions that the contact aspect of the game was a compelling reason for them to play rugby. Other interest in rugby that led these women to play included: the lack of restrictions to the women’s game as it consisted of the same Laws as the men’s game (Suzanne, Interview 4, July 9, 2014), saw the game being played elsewhere and wanted to play as well (Annemaree, Interview 5, March 28, 2015), had male family members and male friends who played and wanted to try playing for herself (Jane, Interview 6, March 31, 2015).

c. What age did you start playing rugby?

Discussed in *Participants* section of Chapter 3.

d. What club did you play for?

Discussed in *Participants* section of Chapter 3.

2) Can you tell me about how you became involved in club rugby?

A commonality between all women in relation to their inauguration of club rugby was their involvement through individuals who were already established in the rugby community. Although these key people differed between though involved, whether it be a high school teacher who played rugby and brought her out to a pitch (Suzanne, Interview 4, July 9, 2014), key members in the rugby community who supported women who wanted to play (Suzanne, Interview 4, July 9, 2014), through women who had already participated in rugby at a different level, but wanted to continue playing through club rugby (Annemaree, Interview 5, March 28, 2015) or through recruitment from other women (Jane, Interview 6, March 31, 2015).

Suzanne (Interview 4, July 9, 2014) stated she had key people who were already part of the rugby community helped to get her club started. As a result of having the help of multiple members from the community who were associated with a variety of clubs, these women thought it best not to align with an already founded club. As such, Suzanne helped to create a women's only club. These women wanted to be seen as equals and work with all of the men's clubs in their region, not just one. She explained "We liked being masters of our own destiny" (Interview 4, p.4).

3) Tell me about your experience playing on the first sanctioned women's rugby team at your club?

The women interviewed discussed the amount of travel that was necessary to play rugby. As there were not many women's teams in Ontario, for one of the participants

there were no other teams in Ontario, the women playing had to travel a significant distance to play games. Women would travel outside the province and country to participant in rugby, as noted by Suzanne: “But those early days where you could get into your car on a Friday afternoon, travel to New York city, play all day Saturday, all day Sunday, get back in your car and travel back home. They were pretty special.” (Interview 4, July 9, 2014, p.3). As there were so few women’s teams, those interviewed mentioned that at times they would borrow players from other teams and vice versa in tournaments to field a full side.

Immersion in the rugby culture was also a large part of the experience the pioneer women had while playing women’s rugby at its inception. After games and practices, women would drink and party with one another. Annemaree (Interview 5, March 28, 2015) discussed the consistency of the women on her team going out to the bar together after practices and games and partying until 2 or 3 in the morning. Furthermore, Suzanne (Interview 4) explained rugby culture at tournaments:

We would play the 3 or 4 games, then we would go shower and head to the tournament party where we would drink and dance all night. We would go home for 2 or 3 o’clock in the morning and sleep somehow. It was funny because in those days even though there was a lot of partying in the culture, we still were very aware that we had to play the next day. We had to get up, we had to eat, we had to sort of take care of our bodies.
(Suzanne, Interview 4, July 9, 2014, p.3-4).

The participants in my research talked about the fun and excitement of playing rugby when there were so few playing. Annemaree (Interview 5) expressed how unique the experience was because all those playing were strong women who played and who would not let anything or anyone stop them from playing. The camaraderie between the women playing let to a unique and positive experience. Although the experience was

positive for most, Jane (Interview 6, March 31, 2015) discussed how her women's team transitioned to a women's only club as a result of the partnership with the men's team not working well for them. Jane expressed that her team was not being recognized or treated as equals, as well as financial issues in which she stated that money brought in by the women was often allocated to the men's team. As such, her women's team decided it would be in their best interest to leave and start a women's only club.

4) What support did you have in regard to playing rugby?

Support given to the women varied and was predominantly dependant on the age/background of an individual. There were men within the rugby community who were helpful in regard to helping women establish a team. There were people willing to fundraise and provide necessary resources that would help a women's team be successful. Some men in the community were supportive and even provided coaching services. It was mentioned that although men were willing to help, they still wanted to voice opinions as to how the women should run their team/club even though it was not theirs to run (Suzanne, Interview 4).

Throughout the interviews, it was evident that most support came from younger to middle aged men. Although some women discussed that there were older men who came from other parts of the world such as England and Wales, frequently referred to as 'old boys', and were supportive, most were not. It was evident that within the rugby community it was the 'old boys' who gave the most resistance to women playing rugby.

a. What support did you have from your family and friends to play rugby?

Parents who were aware of rugby prior to their daughter's participation in the sport tended to be supportive of them playing. Some participants stated that their parents

were confused as to why their daughter's would want to play, but were not against them playing rugby. Some siblings thought they were crazy for playing while others, particularly those who played rugby themselves, thought it was great that their sisters were playing. Although my participants stated that their parents were supportive, even if apprehensive to start, they mentioned that they were aware of parents who were not supportive. "I think it was true for most of the parents. They were reluctant, but then when they eventually came out and were fans and were cheering on the women they just sort of embraced it. But I think for many of them, in the back of their mind, they just kept hoping that it was a phase that we were going through and that we would outgrow it." (Suzanne, Interview 4, July 9, 2014, p.6).

Friends tended to express their confusion as to why these women wanted to play rugby and thought it was weird that they were playing. Some friends thought the pioneer players were crazy for playing or were not interested in them playing rugby at all. The women stated they drifted away from friends who were not interested in them playing rugby and were not part of the rugby community. They also mentioned that there were friends who were very supportive of the women who played rugby. This support tended to come from friends who were also rugby players or friends who were athletes themselves (Jane, Interview 6).

b. What support did your women's team have from your club?

Only one of the three participants' interviews analyzed using cross interview comparison was part of a club that had a men's team. Annemaree explained that the men's team did not put up any 'roadblocks' when the women's team was starting, but they also didn't do much to help/share field space and equipment either (Interview 5,

March 28, 2015, p.5). Some resources were given to them, such as equipment and jerseys, but they were old and used. Annemaree (Interview 5) also mentioned that her women's did have more support than others because the men at her club were younger and there were not a lot of 'old boys'.

Suzanne's club started as a women's only club and she stated that their desire to remain a women's club solidified as they watched the other women's teams who were part of a men's club. She found that women had to put in extra effort and saw that some women's teams were treated poorly (Interview 4). Jane's women's team became a women's only club after a few years of being formed. This transitioned occurred because they were not being treated like equals and there wasn't a club atmosphere (Jane, Interview 6, March 31, 2015).

In terms of the support given from the executive committee, only Annemaree could speak to this as Suzanne and Jane both had executive committees comprised of only women. Annemaree expressed that the executive chose a female representative who was the least outspoken woman on their team. She also mentioned that the women didn't give much input because they didn't know what to ask for (Interview 5). In terms of the support given from the men's team, Annemaree discussed how having a women's team was an 'easy see' because the men wanted to compete with other clubs in the area that already had established a women's side (Interview 5). As well, they mentioned that the men's team did not want to share or help provide resources, such as field space and equipment. Furthermore, male women's coaches did not fight for women's equity as it would mean standing up against their male counterparts (Annemaree, Interview 5). Annemaree (Interview 5) also expressed that support was received from the men's team

once the men saw that the women played good rugby on the field. Jane (Interview 6) stated that he team started a women's only club due to the inequality that was prevalent from the men's side.

- 5) What obstacles did you endure while playing on the first sanctioned women's team at your club?

Discussed in *Patterns* section of Chapter 4.

- 6) Did you play on other women's teams?

All the women interviewed played for other teams either before and/or after participating during the formative years of their club's women's teams. Two of the women participated on provincial teams, which included both Ontario and Quebec. Participation also occurred in different countries, as well as for universities and other club teams.

- a. Tell me about that (or those) experience(s).

Later years of rugby participation tended to be more competitive than the first year and weren't as social (Jane, Interview 6, March 31, 2015). Some of the participants stated that their experiences on other teams were not as positive as the first club team they played for. Annemaree (Interview 5, March 28, 2015) discussed the difficulties she encountered with administrators, public and aggressive resistance to women playing from mostly 'old boys', lack for access to field space and animosity and fighting for equity. Suzanne (Interview 4, July 9, 2014) explained how she created another women's only club when her original club joined with a men's team. Suzanne explained that she wanted to ensure that women still had a voice and were a 'separate political entity' (Interview 4, p.15). Suzanne also discussed a lack of acceptance and welcoming of players from

Eastern Ontario while playing for the provincial team which had a large amount of women from the Toronto league which resulted in a feeling of exclusion.

- i. How did that (or those) experience(s) vary from playing on your club's first sanctioned women's rugby team?

All three of the women mentioned a feeling of family towards the women who played with them during the pioneer years of women's rugby in Ontario. Suzanne (Interview 4, July 9, 2014) explained that they had a great group of people who loved and were passionate about rugby and who cared about each other that first year. Jane further elaborated that there was a sense of camaraderie or 'sisterly love' during those inaugural years and the women 'played hard and partied hard' (Interview 6, March 31, 2015, p.10). Annemaree (Interview 5, March 28, 2015) stated that the first year was the most fun as all the women were learning the game together, which made rugby fun. Suzanne (Interview 4) also mentioned that the beginning years were about development rather than a focus on winning. Both Suzanne (Interview 4) and Annemaree (Interview 5) discussed how all them women participating in rugby during its inaugural years wanted the game to be successful and as a result there was a sense of satisfaction and contribution from all the players.

- 7) What did you enjoy most about playing on the first sanctioned women's rugby team at your club?

Discussed in *Patterns* section of Chapter 4.

- 8) What was your opinion of rugby prior to playing and how did it change, if at all, when you began to play?

Prior to playing rugby, the women interviewed stated that they thought rugby would be challenging to learn (Suzanne, Interview 4, July 9, 2014) and expressed concern

regarding their abilities and how well they could play (Annemaree, Interview 5, March 28, 2015). For those who had parents who participated in rugby, they discussed how there was either no negative views towards rugby (Annemaree, Interview 5) or felt as though she was being ‘dragged out’ to rugby (Jane, Interview 6, March 31, 2015). Annemaree (Interview 5) also discussed how prior to playing rugby she was not aware of what was acceptable as women’s teams were in their infancy to observe. Once the women began to play rugby, she stated that it was much easier to learn the game than originally anticipated (Suzanne, Interview 4) and that rugby was the most amazing sport she had played (Jane, Interview 6).

9) Did playing rugby change or alter the way you felt about yourself?

Every woman interviewed stated that playing rugby changed the way they felt about themselves. Suzanne mentioned that rugby is the biggest contributor to the person she has become (Interview 4, July 9, 2014). Playing rugby impacted the women interviewed in the following ways: increased confidence, increased body confidence, increased focus, longest lasting friendships resulted from rugby, increased self assurance specifically in regard to feeling confident that if attacked she would be alright, and helped in discovering professional life.

10) Is there anything that I may not have asked that you would like to mention?

Only one participant mentioned a topic for further discussion. Suzanne discussed the challenges that women’s rugby had at the national level to get recognized as formal members of the Canadian Rugby Union body and the acceptance of a national team and national championship. This topic could be used for future research.